OKLAHOMA COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE EDUCATORS' ACCESSIBILITY TO RESOURCES AND TRAINING REGARDING COMMUNICATIONS AND MARKETING: A NEEDS ASSESSMENT

By

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Background and Setting

"Everything and everybody in an organization talks. Extension communicates hundreds of marketing messages every day. The actual choice isn't whether to practice marketing or not, but whether to practice it well or poorly" (Boldt, 1988, ¶ 1).

King and Rockwell (1988) stated information is intensified in three ways: repetition, linking it to something, and variation in arrangement and quantity. "Information seeking is a natural activity for all Extension audiences. As Extension workers, we must communicate information adequately and effectively" (King & Rockwell, 1988, ¶ 10).

Many researchers and writers who take on the task of writing about Extension have declared Extension is their best–kept secret (Debord, 2007; McDowell, 2004; Alberts, Wirth, Gilmore, Jones, & McWaters, 2004; and Horrisberger & Crawford, 2007). If Extension is continued to be known as the best kept secret, is anyone creating positive reinforcement for county educators? Should not county educators have the support and encouragement to promote and advocate Extension as needed or wanted? Are educators comfortable promoting Extension when they are expected to promote the best–kept secret?

Communication is something done every day, verbally and nonverbally. Communication is the tool to get Extension to its desired next level. When presenting one of their many explanations and definitions of Extension, Leeuwis and Ban (2004) stated, "Extension draws heavily on communication as a strategy for furthering aspirations" (p. 27).

The need for Extension to further its aspirations also is increased by pressures of society and its need to compete for time and methods of receiving resources and education. Now more than ever, a public agency is needed to communicate with its audiences and disseminate educational materials and programs. An organization may assume a good product will sell itself, but this is not always the case. Even high–quality organizations must communicate their messages and purposes to the public (Warner & Christenson, 1984).

Is Extension playing its role as the public agency it needs to be? Is Extension communicating the message that a premier service is available to a society that continues to grow? Extension educators need to set standards to make sure they are achieving the necessary level of communication to reach their audiences and to ensure the audiences understand the message the educator is sending.

"American society is now more diverse, urban populations have increased, yet the demand for affordable food continues. Just as [Seaman A.] Knapp and [Walter C.] Porter were learning partners, Extension personnel today work as partners with citizens, communities, and university colleagues" (Bull, Cote, Warner, & McKinnie, 2004, ¶ 9). As the population grows, so does its complexity and diversity; therefore, organizations

must compete for the public's time. Extension educators must market their image to compete successfully (Warner & Christenson, 1984).

"Extension should be concerned with its image" (Warner & Christenson, 1984, p. 135). Because the organization is made up of diverse programs, it may be known as different things to different people. Society may view Extension as anything from the youth group known as 4-H, to homemaker's groups, to the soil testing office (Warner & Christenson, 1984).

Extension educators have an opportunity to promote their programs and their diversity. Society's quest for knowledge increases and diversifies continually. Extension educators across the country can help meet the educational needs of society by letting the people know an educator is available to serve them in their counties or by showing them how to access plentiful sources of information via the Internet. "Extension must become the catalyst for connecting people to the wealth of relevant knowledge and research residing within various colleges and disciplines of the university" (ECOP, 2002, p. 2).

"Among their many other duties and responsibilities, county Extension agents are in charge of promoting programs that are beneficial to the residents of their county" (Telg, Irani, Hurst, & Kistler, 2007, ¶ 1). Finding time and resources to market Extension's image may be a challenge for some Extension educators to balance among their other job roles.

> The marketing of Extension and its programs is everyone's job. Every leader, every agent, every specialist, every assistant, and every administrator contribute to Extension's image. Everything we do speaks.

> It's not a matter of whether we communicate; it's a question of what, how, and to whom we communicate. (Warner, 1993, ¶ 6)

These answers to the what, how, and to whom educators communicate may be the necessary difference in keeping active clients participating and attracting new clients.

Through examining the evolution of the role of communicators and issues programming, Donnellan and Montgomery (2005) presented recommendations for Extension administrators and county educators to use to find a way to market their programs effectively:

> Extension communications offices and administrators need to embrace a public relations model that recognizes communications as a critical management function in support of Extension goals. Rather than shun 'public relations' in favor of 'journalism,' communicators must begin to see public relations as a program delivery process for 'relations with publics' for the mutual good of the organization and the people it serves. Training in public relations and marketing is essential for all members of interdisciplinary program planning teams. Accountability requires nothing less. (¶ 1)

An acceptance of public relations and communicating for the good of Extension and of its clients may help the educators' role of promoting their programs and Extension's purpose. Positive public relations can allow educators to realize they already

promote Extension when they help their repeat clients. Educators need to continue this treatment for new clients and the public they have not yet reached.

A study conducted at the University of Florida by Telg et al. (2007) examined the perceptions of Florida Extension agents' marketing and promotion efforts of programs in their counties. Their findings highlight the positive impact effectively marketing Extension can have. It further supports the need for enhancement of communication and marketing collaboration of the county and state administrators, as well as communications specialists in Extension.

> Overall, respondents perceived Extension marketing to be good, positive, beneficial, favorable, important, difficult, up to them, and in their control. These findings indicate that respondents are satisfied with the job of marketing Extension. Not only do they think it is a necessary part of their job, they also find it to be rewarding. (Telg et al., 2007, ¶ 32)

Despite Extension's dependence on communications as a strategy to enhance its purpose, little emphasis has been focused toward its need.

> Little research has been conducted on the marketing and promotional efforts, as well as the training needs of county Extension agents. However, Extension agents are expected to use the media to varying degrees in order to get information out to their audience. A study of what media Extension agents currently use and what they feel comfortable using will help to

provide a basis for developing marketing and promotional training tools for Extension agents. (Telg, et. al., 2007, ¶ 6)

Statement of the Problem

Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service (OCES) educators should have the proper resources and training to communicate and market OCES efficiently and effectively; however, OCES has no well-defined vision or plan available for its educators. Therefore, this study provides benchmark research to identify the perceived needs of educators regarding communications efforts, media sources, and resources to allow development of effective training and resource materials for OCES educators.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine the perceptions of Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service educators regarding their communications and marketing efforts, training needs, and resources.

Objectives

For the purpose of this study, the following objectives were developed:

1. To describe selected personal and professional characteristics of Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service educators.
2. To determine the marketing and communications efforts being conducted by Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service educators.

3. To determine the mass communication methods available to Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service educators.
4. To determine the perceived needs of Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service educators for training and resources to enhance their abilities to market and communicate OCES's purpose, programs, and activities effectively.
5. To determine the relationship between selected personal and professional characteristics of Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service educators and their perceived communications efforts.

Significance of the Study

Assessing the personal and professional characteristics, communication efforts, media sources, and resources of OCES educators will allow development of effective training and resource materials for OCES educators. This assessment will establish a benchmark toward discovering what OCES administrators should develop to improve communications and marketing planning, resources, and training tools for county educators.

Assumptions of the Study

For the purpose of this study, the following assumptions were used by the researcher:

1. The responses given by the OCES educators were honest and accurate.

2. OCES educators were able to provide an accurate evaluation of their marketing and communication activities.
3. Respondents were actual county educators, not specialists or in another Extension position.

Scope and Limitations

The scope of this study was a census of Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service educators attending a conference of Extension educators held January 22-24, 2008, in Stillwater, Oklahoma.

The following limitations were identified for this study:

1. The study was limited to those OCES educators who attended the conference January 22-24, 2008.
2. Respondent participation was voluntary.
3. OCES educators may have negative or positive bias about their need or expectation to communicate and market Extension.

Definitions and Terms

In an attempt to understand key terms used in the Extension and communications and marketing industries, several sources were used to define the following terms:

Change Agent — a person who tries to inform people, thus possibly changing their attitudes or behaviors (Lionberger & Gwin, 1982).

Communication — the act of a sender sending a message to a receiver. The message is to have with it a meaning provided by the sender, which the receiver is

intended to interpret. The act of sending a message may be done through words (most often) or body language (Lionberger & Gwin, 1982).

Cooperative Extension Service (CES) — "a public-funded, non-formal educational system that links the education and research resources of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), land-grant universities, and county administrative units" (Seevers, Graham, & Conklin, 2007, p. 1).

eXtension — "an Internet-based educational partnership of the seventy-four 1862 and 1890 institutions of the land-grant university system that helps people improve their lives by providing access to objective research-based information and learning opportunities" (eXtension, 2007).

Extension Committee on Organizational Policy (ECOP) — a committee that addresses the program and policy issues related to Extension. The committee includes directors from each of the U.S. regions (Seevers et al., 2007).

Extension Educators — employees of Oklahoma State University who provide educational programs in community and rural development, family and consumer sciences, agriculture, and 4-H youth development (Division of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources).

Integrated Marketing Communications — the coordination and integration of all marketing resources of an organization or company to create a marketing plan to achieve a desired impact on consumers while using minimal costs (Clow & Baack, 2004).

Mass Media — methods and mediums of communication used to reach large numbers of people (Lionberger & Gwin, 1982).

Planning — "a formalized attitude and process that involves selecting a rational course of collective action to achieve a future state of affairs. It includes assessing the present state, setting goals, gathering and analyzing information, evaluating information, developing budgets, making decisions, and acting" (Stamats, 2006).

Program (Extension education program) — "a planned sequence of educational experiences guided by specific objectives. The program, which usually occurs over a period of time, includes activities and events that are planned, conducted, and evaluated for their impact on identified needs of the participants" (Seevers et al., 2007, p. 247).

Specialists — faculty members of a university who have expertise in a particular subject-matter area. They translate and disseminate research-based information to county Extension educators (Seevers et al., 2007).

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

Chapter II will address a review of literature that supports this research study, including an overview of (1) the Cooperative Extension Service, (2) integrated marketing communications, (3) needs assessments and surveys, and (4) explanation of the chosen theoretical framework, including Bandura's self-efficacy and Knowles' andragogy.

History of the Cooperative Extension Service

In 1857, a land-grant bill was introduced to Congress (Seevers et al., 2007) marking the beginning of a series of acts to answer the farmer's need for help to improve agricultural methods by adding agricultural schools. Although the land-grant bill was vetoed originally, President Abraham Lincoln signed the Morrill Act into law in 1862 after concerns for funding these colleges were resolved (Seevers et al., 2007). The first states to accept the conditions of the Morrill Act were Iowa, Vermont, and Connecticut. During 1863, fourteen states adopted the legislation, and after eight years, sixteen states were establishing state-sponsored agriculture, mechanical arts, and military tactics instruction (Seevers et al., 2007). In 1890, Oklahoma created its land-grant institution, Oklahoma Agricultural & Mechanical College.

To extend the land-grant mission, the Hatch Act was authored by Seaman A. Knapp, president of Iowa State Agricultural College at Ames. The bill was created to

appropriate federal funds to create and subsidize state experiment stations. In 1882, the bill was first introduced to congress by an Iowa legislator. The Hatch Act did not become a law until 1887 (Green, 1990).

The new agricultural experiment stations provided a new form of communication to rural America by delivering information from research and experimentation conducted at the new institutions. "The [agricultural experiment] stations were required to publish periodic bulletins or reports of projects and make them available to the public. Funds were provided to pay for these experiments and the printing and distribution of the results" (Seevers et al., 2007, p. 25).

The next attempt to aid rural America was the Smith-Lever Act. By extending the benefits of federal aid to land-grant colleges, this Congressional act would expand their use by allowing Extension work to be conducted at each of the land-grant colleges. The Extension work would consist of giving agricultural and home economics instruction and demonstration to the public. The Smith-Lever Act was effective July 1, 1914, allowing cooperative demonstration work to be conducted in fifteen states (Seevers et al., 2007). "The Smith-Lever Act was designed, in part, to eliminate much of the duplication of Extension efforts among the colleges, USDA, and other government agencies by creating one organization for this work" (Seevers et al., 2007, p. 35).

The Smith-Lever Act enabled local governments in each county to be the third partner with agricultural education and experimentation. "The Cooperative Extension System is unique. No other educational system involves so many levels that are interrelated, yet autonomous" (Seevers et. al, 2007, p. 3).

The Cooperative Extension System (CES) links the education and research resources of the USDA, land-grant universities, and county administrative units. To reflect its many functions, the organization's name was changed from Agricultural Extension to CES, Cooperative Extension, or University Extension. The cooperative function of this organization is the partnership of the federal, state, and local entities. The federal partner is the USDA Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service (CSREES). The state partner is the land-grant universities in each state. The local partner is city or county government. This cooperation includes funding needs (Seevers et al., 2007).

The CSREES is part of the executive branch of the federal government. By uniting the Cooperative State Research Service (CSRS) and Extension Service (ES), the expertise and resources of these organizations were consolidated under one leadership structure (USDA, 2008).

CSREES is one of four USDA agencies that make up its Research, Education, and Economics (REE) mission area. The other three agencies are the Agricultural Research Service (ARS), Economics Research Service (ERS), and the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS). "The USDA-REE agencies provide federal leadership in creating and disseminating knowledge spanning the biological, physical, and social sciences related to agricultural research, economic analysis, statistics, extension, and higher education" (USDA, 2008, CSREES overview, ¶ 3).

"CSREES' unique mission is to advance knowledge for agriculture, the environment, human health and well-being, and communities by supporting research, education, and extension in the Land-Grant University System and other partner

organizations" (USDA, CSREES overview, ¶ 4). CSREES helps fund research and Extension programs at the state and local levels and provides program leadership in these areas.

Scientific knowledge is available to everyone who needs it because Extension links the research efforts of the USDA and the land-grant universities (Seevers et al., 2007). "It is a dynamic, ever-changing organization pledged to meeting the country's needs for research, knowledge, and educational programs to enable people to make practical decisions that can improve their lives" (Seevers et al., 2007, p. 2).

CSREES' targeted areas of interest, as listed by the USDA (2008, overview), are grouped in the following national emphasis areas: agricultural and food biosecurity; agricultural systems; animals and animal products; biotechnology and genomics; economics and commerce; education; families, youth and communities; food, nutrition and health; international; natural resources and environment; pest management; plants and plant products; and technology and engineering.

Integrated Marketing Communications

An organization striving to improve its communication and marketing routine should understand the role of integrated marketing communications (IMC). Integrated marketing communications have been given various definitions. Clow and Baack (2004) defined IMC as the coordination and integration of all marketing resources of an organization or company to create a marketing plan to create a desired impact on consumers while using minimal costs.

"Integrated marketing communications takes advantage of the effective management of the communications channel" (Clow & Baack, 2004, p. 21). Furthermore, the first step to an integrated marketing is a master marketing plan (Clow & Baack, 2004).

Clow and Baack (2004) offered primary steps required to complete a marketing plan. These steps include preparing a situational analysis, defining marketing objectives, determining a marketing budget, developing marketing strategies and marketing tactics, and completing an evaluation of performance.

Client and non-client effects should be considered during the development of an integrated marketing communications plan. Three kinds of effects that may result from exposure to a mass media message were recognized by Lionberger and Gwin (1982): 1) cognitive change: mass media messages may change or add to the information that the person possesses; 2) affective change: it can change people's attitudes, beliefs, or opinions about something or about themselves; and 3) behavior change: a change in a person's perspective, the agent usually work for this the most.

"Everyone has an obligation to try to communicate in a clear, understandable manner. The communicator owes that as a courtesy to the other person" (Lionberger & Gwin, 1982, p. 109). However, communications may have multiple meanings, and they possibly vary from person to person. Lionberger and Gwin (1982) defined communication as the act of a sender sending a message to a receiver. The message is to have with it a meaning provided by the sender, which the receiver is intended to interpret. The act of sending a message may be done through words (most often) or body language.

In their definition of communication, Clow and Baack (2004) also suggested that the receiver must process information from the sender effectively.

To understand communications he or she must understand the parts of the communication process: the sender, an encoding process, the transmission device, the decoding process, and the receiver. Noise is anything that may interrupt the flow of information from the sender to the receiver (Clow & Baack, 2004).

Leeuwis and Ban (2004) divided media into the following three main classes, with the following examples: 1) mass media: newspapers, farm journals, and radio; 2) interpersonal media: a direct exchange between the sender and receiver, such as a telephone conversation; 3) hybrid media: combines the potential of the first two media, e.g. Internet. The knowledge of these different types of exposure may be used by applying them to the development of different media to promote Extension's mission and programs.

If Extension educators use mass media as a part of an integrated marketing communications plan, the educator, specialists, and administrators should know and understand the usefulness different media may have in their counties. One of the possible media is radio. Seevers et al. (2007) recognizes radio as the most accessible of all mass media because it has the ability to disseminate information to a large amount of people in a short amount of time, often because radios are in almost every home and vehicle. Furthermore, Seevers et al. explains that Extension educators may use radio in a variety of ways. They may have a daily program, a weekly talk show, or a call-in program to answer specific questions. Follow-up information can be obtained from an office call, e-mail, or fact sheet.

Another medium available to some counties is television. “With television, the Extension educator can give a ‘how-to’ method demonstration and reach an audience many times larger than the attendance at a meeting” (Seevers et al., 2007, p. 163).

A method to reach the public that is continuously growing is electronic media. “Electronic technology is revolutionizing how we learn, entertain ourselves, communicate, and do our jobs” (Seevers et al., 2007, p. 164). The World Wide Web and Internet technologies can be powerful tools for Extension educators. “The Internet and other digital tools have enabled learning to occur during time periods and locations that fit the learner’s needs. The use of the Internet has enabled Extension educators to access a wide range of scientific information” (Seevers et al., 2007, p. 164).

Extension educators may be able to apply the numerous methods of communicating and marketing by understanding the purpose of their uses in consistent public relations and organizational promotion.

Boldt (1988) established that staff should be trained in how to communicate their organization’s direction, values, and philosophy. Furthermore, he emphasized that organizational language should be consistently and constantly communicated to clientele, stakeholders, and the general public.

Knowing and understanding the types of media and methods to communicate to Extension audiences may help educators increase their communications and marketing efforts even further. “Communications should be planned to create awareness, stimulate interest, and ultimately produce participation by targeted audiences” (Chappell, 1990, ¶ 1).

Marketing Plans in the Cooperative Extension Service

"Accountability. That's the challenge facing all extension professionals" (Donnellan & Montgomery, 2005, ¶ 1).

Warner and Christenson (1984) presented a needs assessment and review of the national Extension organization that includes effects of a multifaceted organization with a diverse audience that must be as concerned of nonusers as they are users. With their needs assessment, Warner and Christenson (1984) explained how the many Extension programs that are available for its public can be a challenge to communicate, as they are a part of one organization, not parts to be sold individually.

"There is no question that Extension suffers from multiple identities" (Warner & Christenson, 1984, p. 136). Little connection is made among Extension's programs. Home economics, community development, agriculture and natural resources, and 4-H programs have loyal clients who also may be unaware of the Extension connection and other programs it provides. The promotion of Extension's many programs is not the easiest task for any educator, but is important (Warner & Christenson, 1984).

Promoting an organization as diverse as Extension to its own diverse clients and nonclients, mentioned by Warner and Christenson (1984), may be accomplished with even greater effectiveness if educators could apply their knowledge of their clients' needs and the best marketing advantages for their audiences.

> Because each community differs in its needs, interests, stage of development, and communication channels, extension educators can gain the most acceptance of new ideas and technology if they understand the local situation regarding these

> things and base educational messages and programs on them. Thus it is best to determine local needs and formulate local education and communication plans first. Then attention can turn to what the state extension communication plan might be to help the local plans succeed (Lionberger & Gwin, 1982, p. 153).

An individual educator may have a different definition of marketing and communicating than others. Stakeholders of county programs also may have a say about what marketing efforts should or should not take place by educators. Educators need to establish expected performance and boundaries with key stakeholders in their counties by establishing a marketing plan, with recommendations or guidelines from state administration. William G. Boldt (1988) outlined the development of a marketing plan for an Extension group. The details of this plan range from the permanent marketing committee and a marketing audit to an incentive program for marketing efforts.

On the communications role in participatory planning, Lionberger & Gwin (1982) offered the following: "The planning itself is probably the greatest communications and teaching tool extension has. It permits educating community leaders as they study the situation, needs, and alternatives to improve agriculture and family living in their community" (p. 167).

Each community has a different set of possible communication channels and conditions for information exchange. Lionberger and Gwin (1982) recommended the following for county educators: 1) the communications strategy should serve users – not the state or organization's system; 2) use as many channels as is logical; 3) involve a communication specialist in planning programs; 4) seek help from professional

journalists; and 5) review how people respond to mass media messages and suggested uses effective practice.

When a community's needs are realized, the county educator may adapt mass media pieces to disseminate to clients and nonclients. According to Seevers et al. (2007), mass media methods that may support personal or group contact with clients are news stories, circular letters, radio, and television. These methods also may reach a larger and diverse clientele. "Though the intensity of the teaching contact through mass media is less, this is offset by the large number of people reached and the low cost per unit of coverage" (Seevers et al., 2007, p. 162).

Just as understanding the local situation was emphasized by Lionberger and Gwin (1982), a team-oriented marketing process to increase organizational visibility is emphasized by Boldt (1988). "Staff should be trained and encouraged to 'never miss an opportunity' to market Extension. Extension's future depends on the success of the marketing team" (Boldt, 1988, ¶ 17).

One of the key qualities for future Extension educators will be effective communication. Along with their ability to facilitate the learning of others, they should be able to understand and use personal and mass communication techniques (Patterson, 1991).

Marketing and Communications in Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Services

The purpose of research and Extension was to help the citizens of rural America receive information to better their lives. Experiment and research institutions were

developed across the United States, including a location at the Oklahoma Agricultural & Mechanical College (Oklahoma A & M), what is now Oklahoma State University (OSU), in Stillwater, Oklahoma.

During 1894, the Oklahoma A & M experiment station went from publishing four to 6,000 bulletins per year, along with producing a monthly press release (Green, 1990).

"The meager output in the information from the station funneled through the bulletins and releases to the press failed to meet the needs of many, perhaps most, farmers who had pressing immediate questions not yet answered by the bulletins" (Green, 1990, p. 24).

"From 1886 through 1913, the station published eighty-three bulletins and twenty-four circulars" (Green, 1990, p. 68). Furthermore, the diversity of the bulletin subjects ranged from feeding of cattle and proper care of melons to the control of animal disease and the application of animal manure (Green, 1990). Though Extension topics and programs may be more diverse, some original topics still remain, and the clients' needs continue to be the reason Extension provides service. This service is now accomplished through more methods of communication.

In 2003, a strategic plan was developed by the Division of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources (DASNR) at OSU. "OCES makes the university accessible to state residents no matter where they live" (DASNR, 2003, p. 1 – S.W.O.T. Analysis).

Orr (2003) conducted a study to determine "the informational needs of limited-scale landowners in the urban/rural interface of Lincoln County, Oklahoma" (Orr, 2003, p. 4). This study found that 108 (22.50% of respondents) use OCES services to receive agricultural information, and was the most frequent source reported for this type of

information. Orr also found that Lincoln County residents preferred to receive direct mail as a type of information delivery.

In her findings, Orr (2003) concluded, "It is critical for the Cooperative Extension Service to understand the informational needs and the preferred delivery format of its clientele" (p. 70). Furthermore, the study led the researcher to determine, "The Cooperative Extension Service needs to focus on strategies to improve relations with its audience. Information dissemination methods need to be determined by the audience the Cooperative Extension Service is trying to reach" (Orr, 2003, p. 70).

Needs Assessments and Surveys

"Needs assessments are a critical element of effective Extension programming and one of the key components of Extension work" (Phibbs, Relf, & Hunnings, 2005, ¶1).

A needs assessment (NA) is "a systematic set of procedures undertaken for the purpose of setting priorities and making decisions about program or organizational improvement and allocation of resources. The priorities are based on identification of needs" (Witkin & Altschuld, 1995, p. 4). The purpose of a needs assessment is to set priorities on needs of people in a system from information gathered by the assessor. The information gathered is expected to set criteria for allocating resources and for program development and improvement (Witkin & Altschuld, 1995).

A needs assessment may uncover what the performance problem is, who it affects, how it affects them, and what may be achieved by training (Rothwell & Kazanas, 2004).

"The emergent use of needs assessment is largely traceable to fundamental changes in the society and how it goes about providing for certain needs of its members" (Johnson, Meiller, Miller, & Summers, 1987, p. 20).

The NA should produce information that can be presented to stakeholders as a result, conclusion, or next step. Furthermore, "if the information is to contribute to achieving the intended purpose, it must be perceived as evidence by those whose actions or decisions it is hoped to reinforce or change" (Johnson et al., 1987, p. 33). This may allow assurance that stakeholders will be able to comprehend NA results and follow through with recommendations.

Witkin and Altschuld (1995) presented a three-phase plan for assessing needs. Phase one is preassessment, which is setting up a management plan for the needs assessment. Phase two is the actual assessment, which is determining the context, scope, and boundaries. Phase three is the postassessment; during this phase, priorities are set on needs at applicable levels.

> Needs assessment should be described for what it is — a way to economize efforts by targeting only the instruction that is necessary to solve or avert human performance problems. That will save time and money by avoiding investments in "sheep dip training" that exposes all people to the same instruction despite unique individual or group needs (Rothwell & Kazanas, 2004, p. 82).

One of the most frequently used means of gathering data in needs assessment is a survey (Witkin & Altschuld, 1995).

Witkin and Altschuld (1995) presented several advantages and disadvantages to conducting surveys for needs assessments. Some of the advantages include that "the written survey is relatively easy to administer"; "the structured instrument offers less opportunity for sidetracking and irrelevant information than do group interactive processes"; and "a great deal of data can be gathered in a relatively short period time and can generally be aggregated and analyzed by computer processing". Some of the disadvantages include that "needs assessors often expect the survey to provide information for which the method is unsuitable"; "NA surveys rarely are evaluated for validity and reliability"; and "mailed surveys have become so common that many people discard them without responding" (p. 129).

Surveys conducted for needs assessments may provide data to make decisions for planning, resource allocation, or evaluation. Effective NA surveys will ask respondents for opinions based on their backgrounds and experiences, or other areas for which they have direct knowledge (Witkin & Altschuld, 1995).

> Effectively linking method with purpose to produce evidence is the crux of a needs assessment strategy. Regardless of how carefully done and methodologically sound an effort may be, its value is limited if it fails to influence policy and/or allocation decisions, either changing or rationalizing them (Johnson et al., 1987, p. 24).

"The survey is one of the more popular approaches to needs assessment. While surveys can provide excellent information for needs assessments, surveys need expertise, time, and resources to be accurate and relevant" (Israel & Ilvento, 1995, ¶ 5).

Not only is a survey effective as a NA tool, but also it is useful in various industries that may need to access organizational characteristics. "Survey research is a common task in both communications and marketing, particularly when there is a strong need to assess attitudes, preferences, interests or demographic characteristics of a large group of people" (Boone, Meisenbach, & Tucker, 2000, p. 93). Furthermore, Boone et al. (2000, p. 93) present a few questions that should be considered:

- Was the questionnaire field tested and assessed for validity before use?
- Was statistical or other evidence provided to ensure reliability of the questions used in the study?
- If sampling was used, was the sample of sufficient size and was the sample assignment conducted randomly or using the proper selection criteria?
- Was the response rate of sufficient size to generalize to the sample or population?
- Were the proper statistical tests used and reported in analyzing the data?

"It is important to think of questionnaire design as an attempt to achieve two objectives" (Dillman, 2007, p. 80). The objectives are to reduce nonresponse and to reduce measurement error.

Dillman (2007) presents six visual elements for determining how people divide what they see into separate groupings of a survey. They include location, shape, size, brightness, simplicity and regularity, and a consistent figure-ground format (the relationship between the foreground and the background of a survey instrument). "Together they influence which words are read in what order and to some extent the meaning of those words" (Dillman, 2007, p. 96).

A self-administered survey question should be developed that every potential respondent will interpret, respond, and answer in a consistent manner (Dillman, 2007).

Theoretical Framework

Before reviewing the personal and professional characteristics, communications efforts, media sources, and resources of OCES educators that will allow development of effective training and resource materials for OCES educators, an explanation of the chosen theoretical framework, including Bandura's self-efficacy theory and Knowles' andragogy, is necessary and useful.

Self-Efficacy

"An efficacy expectation is the conviction that one can successfully execute the behavior required to produce the outcomes" (Bandura, p. 193, 1977). The difference between an outcome and efficacy expectation is that a person may believe a certain course of actions produces certain outcomes, but if this person has doubts about his or her ability to perform the necessary activities, these doubts do not influence his or her behavior (Bandura, 1977).

"Perceived self-efficacy influences choice of behavioral settings" (Bandura, 1977, p. 193). Perceived self-efficacy can have direct influence on choice of activities and coping efforts when initiated (Bandura, 1977). If a person has higher perceived self-efficacy, he is more likely to persist in activities and put effort toward achievement of the activity. The difference between perceived self-efficacy and actual self-efficacy is that an individual can think he has a certain skill level that is above or below his actual skill level. The factor separating the two is his use of the skill. Extension educators may perceive themselves to be effective educators, but if they do not apply the results and suggestions from evaluations provided by clients, they do not make full use of their resources; thus, they are not fully effective.

Efficacy expectations include three dimensions that affect performance implications. These dimensions are (1) magnitude: the level of difficulty of a task; (2) generality: how the task may relate or is possibly similar to other tasks or the degree it can be generalized among other situations; and (3) strength: the level of how strong or weak a level of efficacy is (Bandura, 1977).

Expectations of personal efficacy are derived from four sources. These sources are performance accomplishments, various experience, verbal persuasion, and physiological states. Situations may use more or less of any of the sources, depending on the tasks and how efficacy is applied (Bandura, 1977). Performance accomplishments are influential because of the dependence on past personal experiences. A successful performance will raise mastery expectations, and failures lower them. The effects of these performances on an individual's behavior will depend on the situation, timing, and patterns of experiences related to a task or activity. The vicarious experience includes the

performance of others and local social factors. Verbal persuasion is the factor of a person being led by others to create a behavior toward efficacy. Interactive and independent factors come into play to create the social effect on a person's efficacy. Emotional arousals usually are triggered by stressful and taxing situations. If a person knows his normal performance of an activity is exceptionally well, he may become excited or extra confident when performing a task; if he has experienced hardship or negative feelings linked to an activity, he may develop an automatic negative or depressing feeling when triggered (Bandura, 1977).

"If an individual avoids an area because of perceived inability to accomplish the behaviors or tasks involved, it is also unlikely that the individual will gain enough familiarity with the task domain to give interests a chance to develop" (Betz & Borgen, 2000, p. 34). In relation to this study, if an OCES educator perceives he is not capable of developing and maintaining a Web site to provide information to his or her clients, it is unlikely he will use his own effort to become comfortable with the task.

According to Gist (1987), numerous implications of self-efficacy exist for organizational development. An individual with low self-efficacy may share his or her training needs with appropriate administrators. Self-efficacy could be used as one criterion for whether training is appropriate for the work setting. Identifying key efficacy perceptions may be useful in determining performance levels when little history of past performance is available. Furthermore, "Research is needed to determine if performance can be improved by increasing efficacy perceptions" (Gist, 1987, p. 481).

Andragogy

Andragogy has developed from the roots of adult learning and pedagogy in an attempt to tailor needs of adult learners such as Extension educators. "Andragogy is any intentional and professionally guided activity that aims at a change in adult persons" (Knowles, Holton, and Swanson, 2005, p. 60). The term andragogy may have been first used in 1833, but it was not introduced to Americans until 1967. Its development has grown through journal articles and many studies since (Knowles et al., 2005). Shortly after World War I, a body of research about adult learners emerged, and its integrated framework was developed in the past few decades (Knowles et al., 2005).

Knowles et al. (2005) brought forward that criticisms of andragogy by others reflect the difference of goals and purposes of adult education. "Therein lies the strength of andragogy: It is a set of core adult learning principles that apply to all learning situations" (Knowles et al., 2005, p. 2). Andragogy shows its strengths when it is adapted to the learner and his or her situation. The core principles of andragogy can apply to all adult learning situations, as long as they are considered and are applicable to the factors and needs of the situation (Knowles et al., 2005).

Using the core principle of adult learning, andragogy is enabling those designing and conducting adult learning to build effective processes of learning for adults (Knowles, et. al., 2005).

> Education is an activity undertaken or initiated by one or more agents that is designed to effect changes in the knowledge, skill, and attitudes of individuals, groups, or communities. The term emphasizes the educator,

> the agent of change who presents stimuli and reinforcement for learning and designs activities to induce change (Knowles et al., 2005, p. 10).

The two major theories of learning are behaviorist/connectionist and cognitive/gesalt theories. Learning occurs when a person experiences change or is expected to experience change (Knowles et al., 2005).

"The andragogical model is based on several assumptions that are different from those of the pedagogical model" (Knowles et al., 2005, p. 61). A summary of these assumptions presented by Knowles et al., (2005) include 1) the need to know: adults need to know why they need to learn, before learning; 2) the learners' self–concept: adults feel the need to be responsible for their own decisions; 3) the role of learners' experiences: adults have more experience and different quality of educational activities than youth; 4) readiness to learn: adults prepare themselves to learn what they need to know, and expect to apply these to real-life situations; 5) orientation to learning: adults learning goals are life-centered, apposed to youth's learning goals which are subject-centered; and 6) motivation: adults respond to external social and personal pressures.

Providing effective facilitation is to challenge learners by examining their values, beliefs, and behaviors and how they coincide with values, beliefs, and behaviors they may not want to consider. These confrontations do not need to be dealt with or presented in an adversarial or threatening manner; the effective facilitator will encourage adults to consider rationally perspectives of the world that are different from their own, without making the adult learner feel threatened, influenced, or coaxed (Knowles et al., 2005).

Educational institutions teach in everything they do: "No educational institution teaches just through its courses, workshops, and institutes; no corporation teaches just through its in-service education programs; and no voluntary organization teaches just through its meetings and study groups" (Knowles, 1980, p. 66).

Although it may be suggested that andragogy is not specific enough to one area or way of learning, Knowles et al., (2005) suggested strength occurs from the ability to transcend andragogy to multiple areas of application. The practice of andragogy includes three dimensions: (1) goals and purposes for learning, (2) individual and situational differences, and (3) andragogy: core adult learning principles (Knowles et al., 2005).

Andragogy changes the roles and functions of the learner and teacher by considering the learner as the real subject of their learning process. The learner is self-directed, responsible, and the primary performer. The teacher is the expert, co–author, and counselor (Zmeyov, 1998).

Other areas of andragogy are training and learning in organizations and the use of learning for human resource development (Knowles et al., 2005). "Research in organizational training suggests there are three aspects to the need to know: the need to know how the learning will be conducted, what will be learned, and why it will be valuable" (Knowles et al., 2005, p. 201). These needs affect motivation to learn, learning outcomes, and post-training motivation to use learning (Knowles et al., 2005, p. 201).

"Andragogy stresses the importance of life experience, self-direction, and collective inquiry for effective adult learning" (Williams, 2005, p. 7). Furthermore, since adults also have conceptual control over their own cognitive processes, honoring adults' wisdom and independence is essential when developing professional development

programs for learners. Professional development can bridge the gap between an adult's academic training and growth in practice (Williams, 2005).

"With the teacher as the center of learning, ongoing administrative support needs to be embedded in learning goals to create momentum for growth" (Williams, 2005, p. 12). Professional development has the opportunity to transform an organization. This transformation can be helped if administrators and educators work together and share needs of the organization and individuals.

Learners must understand how a learning experience will help them improve their skills and attitudes in work situations. Due to the independence of adults, they should be included in the planning of their own learning processes to have an enjoyable learning environment. An adult's learning style will differ depending on personal and educational background, abilities, and general health. Training designers should consider these various learning styles when planning educational and learning experiences (Dastoor & Reed, 1993). "The level of readiness of an adult is closely associated to the need to know" (Knowles et al., p. 202, 2005).

Learning experiences differ from each situation and adult. "The challenge has been, and continues to be, to define what is most characteristic of adult learners, to establish core principles, and to define how to adapt those core principles to varying circumstances" (Knowles et al., 2005, p. 202).

The facilitators of any OCES training can apply the principles of andragogy and develop stronger training if they work with educators to develop what they need to learn, using the learning environment best suited for them. Educators also need to know what is expected of them to make sure trainers make best use of their efforts and methods.

Chapter Summary

Chapter II provided a review of literature that supports this research study. The history of the Cooperative Extension Service included the development of land-grant colleges, experiment stations, and the Extension Service through three Congressional acts. The cohesion of these organizations created a source of combined resources and knowledge already in place. Extension workers began demonstrating and instructing to the public in homes, at colleges, and via publications.

From the early Extension bulletins written as one of the few sources of communication to the public, the ways and resources to communicate to the Extension public have developed immensely. Methods to communicate to clients and nonclients have also progressed through the development and strategies of integrated marketing communications.

Needs assessments and surveys can help an organization evaluate where they are, where they need to be, and what they need to do to get to a desired organizational structure. Inquiring information from within organizations and from clients and nonclients can help organizational leaders develop steps in reaching goals.

The difference between Bandura's perceived self-efficacy and actual self-efficacy is that an individual can think he has a certain skill level that is above or below his actual skill level. The factor separating the two is the use of the skill. Bandura's perceived self-efficacy can affect directly behaviors and beliefs of skill levels and performance capabilities. For example, if an OCES educator perceives he is not capable of developing

and maintaining a Web site to provide information to his or her clients, it is unlikely he will use enough of his own effort to become comfortable with the task.

According to Knowles' andragogy theory, learners must understand how a learning experience will help them improve their skills and attitudes in work situations; therefore, the facilitators of any OCES training can apply the principles of andragogy by working with educators to develop what they need to learn using the learning environment best suited for them.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Chapter I addressed the significance and need of this study. Assessing the personal and professional characteristics, communication efforts, media sources, and resources of OCES educators will allow development of effective training and resource materials for OCES educators. This assessment will establish a benchmark toward discovering what OCES administrators should develop to improve communications and marketing planning, resources, and training tools for county educators.

Chapter II provided a review of literature that supports this research study, including an overview of (1) the Cooperative Extension Service, (2) integrated marketing communications, (3) needs assessments and surveys, and (4) explanation of the chosen theoretical framework, including Bandura's self-efficacy and Knowles' andragogy.

Chapter III addresses the methods used to conduct this study, including reliability and validity testing. The population, as well as the setting in which the survey took place, is described.

Statement of the Problem

Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service (OCES) educators should have the proper resources and training to communicate and market OCES efficiently and

effectively; however, OCES has no well-defined vision or plan available for its educators. Therefore, this study provides benchmark research to identify the perceived needs of educators regarding communications efforts, media sources, and resources to allow development of effective training and resource materials for OCES educators.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine the perceptions of Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service educators regarding their communications and marketing efforts, training needs, and resources.

Objectives

For the purpose of this study, the following objectives were developed:

1. To describe selected personal and professional characteristics of Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service educators.
2. To determine the marketing and communications efforts being conducted by Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service educators.
3. To determine the mass communication methods available to Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service educators.
4. To determine the perceived needs of Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service educators for training and resources to enhance their abilities to market and communicate OCES's purpose, programs, and activities effectively.

5. To determine the relationship between selected personal and professional characteristics of Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service educators and their perceived communications efforts.

Institutional Review Board

This study involved human subjects; therefore, federal regulation and Oklahoma State University policy required all instruments and procedures to be reviewed and approved before this research could begin. This requirement is to protect the rights of individuals involved in behavioral and biomedical research. This study and the instrument were reviewed by the OSU Office of University Research Services through the Institutional Review Board (IRB) and received permission to continue. This study was assigned the following IRB number: AG0749 (see Appendix A).

Research Design

This was a descriptive study designed to determine the perceptions of Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service educators regarding their communications and marketing efforts, training needs, and resources. Data for this descriptive study were collected using a two-page survey, which was distributed to OCES county educators at the 2008 Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service statewide conference.

Population

The target population of this research was Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service educators (N = 204) registered for the statewide DASNR/Extension conference held January 22-24, 2008, in Stillwater, Oklahoma.

According to the personnel directory of the Division of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources (2008), OCES has 195 "educators" within the state's four districts: northeast, northwest, southeast, and southwest. The northeast district has 60 educators. The northwest district has 37 educators. The southeast district has 43 educators, and the southwest district has 55 educators. There are 94 (48.20%) males and 101 (51.79%) females. As of April 14, 2008, OCES had 13 Extension educator vacancies (DASNR, 2008).

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OKLAHOMA COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE

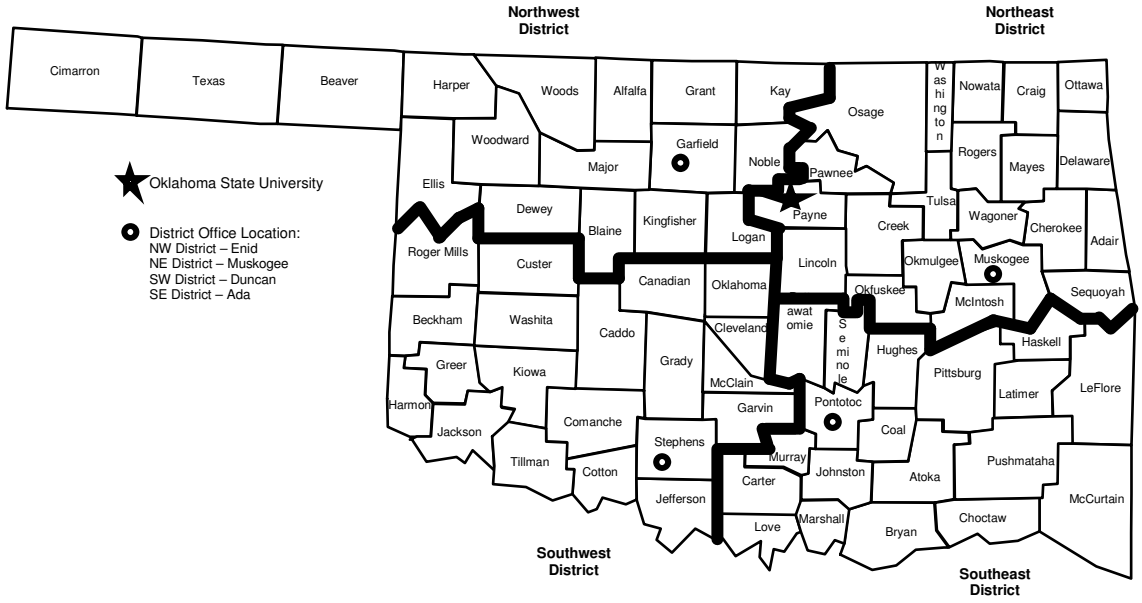

Figure 1: Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Services District and County Map (OCES, 2008).

Instrument Design

The instrument for this study was developed from three previous studies: Hanson (2007); Neehouse (2005); and the National Extension Committee Organizational Policy (ECOP) Task Force on Communications and Marketing (2007). By using these instruments, a needs assessment instrument appropriate for Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service was created.

Questions related to perceptions of OCES educators regarding their communications and marketing efforts, training needs, and recourses were created by

modifying questions from Hanson's (2007) study of the Oklahoma agricultural education teachers and from Neehouse's (2005) study of Extension agents in West Virginia.

Additional questions were used from an instrument created in June 2007 by the National ECOP Task Force on Communications and Marketing to collect data from Extension directors and administrators regarding marketing in Extension.

The first section of the survey instrument (see Appendix G) included a table with 15 mass communication delivery methods that are of possible use for OCES educators. OCES educators were asked to rate these items by circling the number that corresponded with their individual frequency of use, preference of delivery method, mass communication delivery skills, source of mass communication skill training, desire for additional communication training, and choices for training. The second section of the survey instrument consisted of 22 questions about the educators' personal and professional characteristics, such as education background and job information. The questions also included further questions about their preferences for communication and marketing practices and resources.

Instrument Reliability and Validity

A panel of experts (see Appendix H) consisting of OCES faculty members, a former OCES educator, and faculty members in the OSU College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources' Department of Agricultural Education, Communications and Leadership determined the competencies and needs assessment questions to be retained or added in the instrument. The panel reviewed the instrument for face and content validity. The instrument and accompanying documents (see Appendices B, C, D,

E, F, and G) were submitted to the OSU Institutional Review Board in November 2007 for approval (see Appendix A).

A pilot test was delivered via U.S. mail to K-State Research and Extension (KSRE) agents during December 2007 to determine instrument reliability. These individuals were given the same cover letter, consent statement, and instrument designed for the OCES educators, along with a cover letter written for them and a sheet to leave comments for the researcher regarding the study. The KSRE agents were instructed to complete the survey and write comments to the researcher regarding concerns about the instrument. Of the KSRE agents who received the pilot test instrument (n = 20), 14 returned the instrument. A Cronbach's alpha was calculated on scaled items of the pilot test to determine instrument reliability and consistency (Vogt, 2005). The Cronbach's alpha for the two sets of scaled items were 0.601, and 0.819. Test items were reviewed and restated according to results of the pilot test.

Data Collection Methods

OCES educators were notified of the research and its purpose in mid-January via e-mail. The instrument was distributed to all the OCES educators who registered (N = 204) and attended the statewide DASNR/Extension conference held January 22-24, 2008, at Oklahoma State University in Stillwater, Oklahoma. Educators received the instrument with a cover letter and an informed consent statement with their conference registration packets. Educators picked up their registration packets at various times during the conference, including Tuesday morning, Wednesday morning, or Thursday afternoon.

Educators could return the instrument to the researcher during any of the three days of the conference. Educators were notified they could return the survey via mail after the conference; this was announced only on the last day of the conference and in a follow-up e-mail. Addressed, prepaid envelopes were provided to anyone requesting to mail his or her survey after the conference. Educators received a follow-up e-mail January 27, 2008, asking them to send the instrument to the researcher if they had already done so.

Data Analysis

Of the 204 OCES educators who registered for the statewide DASNR/Extension conference, 124 submitted a completed survey instrument, including respondents who mailed their survey after the conference instead of submitting it at the conference. During the conference, 110 OCES educators submitted the instrument, and 14 mailed the instrument after the conference.

The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics in SPSS ® version 15 for Windows. The returned surveys were dated to note early and late responses for comparison purposes. Nonresponse error was controlled by comparing late to early respondents (Lindner, Murphy, & Briers, 2001). The early respondents (n = 14) were those who returned surveys Tuesday, January 22, 2008 (the first day of the conference), while the late respondents (n = 14) were those who returned surveys via mail after the conference (after January 25, 2008). No significant differences were found using an independent sample t-test to check for variance between early and late responders; thus,

late responders were included in the study. A t-test determines the difference between the means of two groups (Vogt, 2005).

After data were analyzed, the quantifiable relationship between variables and their magnitude of correlations was described using Spearman's Rho (Vogt, 2005) and Davis' (1971) statistic tests and descriptions. According to Davis (1971), correlations are considered "perfect positive" when $r = 1.0$; "very strong positive association" when $r =$ 0.70 to 0.99; "substantial positive association" when $r = 0.50$ to 0.69; "moderate positive association" when $r = 0.30$ to 0.49; "low positive association" when $r = 0.10$ to 0.29; "negligible positive correlation" when $r = 0.01$ to 0.09; "negligible negative association" when $r = -0.01$ to -0.09; "low negative association" when $r = -0.10$ to -0.29; and "moderate negative association" when $r = -0.30$ to -0.49.

Real limits were used when figuring means (i. e. 1 – 1.49, 1.5 – 1.99, and 2.0 – 2.49). According to Vogt (2005) real limits are "The points falling between half a measurement unit below and half a unit above the number" (p. 265).

Chapter Summary

Chapter III addressed the methods used to conduct this study, including validity and reliability testing. The population was described, and the setting in which the instrument was distributed also was explained. Of the 204 OCES educators who registered the statewide DASNR/Extension conference held January 22-24, 2008, at Oklahoma State University in Stillwater, Oklahoma, 124 submitted a completed survey instrument, including respondents who mailed their instruments after the conference. Data were gathered and analyzed using descriptive statistics. After data were analyzed,

the quantifiable relationship between variables and their magnitude of correlations was described using Spearman's Rho and Davis' (1971) descriptions of relationship strengths.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

INTRODUCTION

Chapter I addressed the significance and need of this study. Assessing the personal and professional characteristics, communication efforts, media sources, and resources of OCES educators will allow development of effective training and resource materials for OCES educators. This assessment will establish a benchmark toward discovering what OCES administrators should develop to improve communications and marketing planning, resources, and training tools for county educators.

Chapter II provided a review of literature that supports this research study, including an overview of (1) the Cooperative Extension Service, (2) integrated marketing communications, (3) needs assessments and surveys, and (4) explanation of the chosen theoretical framework, including Bandura's self-efficacy and Knowles' andragogy.

Chapter III addressed the methods used to conduct this study, including reliability and validity testing. The population, as well as the setting in which the survey took place, is described. Of the 204 OCES educators who registered for the statewide DASNR/Extension conference held January 22-24, 2008, at Oklahoma State University, in Stillwater, Oklahoma, 124 submitted a completed survey instrument.

Chapter IV will provide the findings of the study. The findings represent respondents' perceptions of their communications and marketing efforts, training needs, and resources. These findings are grouped by objective for interpretation of this study.

Statement of the Problem

Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service (OCES) educators should have the proper resources and training to communicate and market OCES efficiently and effectively; however, OCES has no well-defined vision or plan available for its educators. Therefore, this study provides benchmark research to identify the perceived needs of educators regarding communications efforts, media sources, and resources to allow development of effective training and resource materials for OCES educators.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine the perceptions of Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service educators regarding their communications and marketing efforts, training needs, and resources.

Objectives

For the purpose of this study, the following objectives were developed:

1. To describe selected personal and professional characteristics of Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service educators.
2. To determine the marketing and communications efforts being conducted by Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service educators.

3. To determine the mass communication methods available to Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service educators.
4. To determine the perceived needs of Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service educators for training and resources to enhance their abilities to market and communicate OCES's purpose, programs, and activities effectively.
5. To determine the relationship between selected personal and professional characteristics of Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service educators and their perceived communications efforts.

Findings of Objective 1

A total of 204 OCES educators registered for the conference, 110 educators returned their surveys during the conference, and 14 mailed their surveys to the researcher after the conference. Therefore, the response rate was 60.78% (n = 124).

The first objective of this study was to describe selected personal and professional characteristics of Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service educators.

The following 13 questions were included in the survey instrument to answer Objective 1: 1) What is your gender? 2) In what year were you born? 3) What is your highest degree? 4) In what academic area is your bachelor's degree? 5) Are you pursuing an advanced degree? If yes, what area? 6) Did you receive your undergraduate education from Oklahoma State University? If no, where did you receive your bachelor's degree(s)? 7) What Extension program area(s) do you serve? 8) How many years have you been an OCES educator? 9) How many educators, program assistants, or

administrators work in your county? 10) In what district is your county? 11) How satisfied are you with the amount of time you must devote to your job? 12) How closely was your formal education related to your present job? and 13) Please select the three areas that best define your county's most significant challenges.

Of the respondents surveyed, 48 (38.70%) were male and 73 (58.90%) were female. The average year of birth for the respondents was 1964; the range of year of birth was 1943 to 1984 (see Table 1 and Table 2).

Table 1

Selected Characteristics of OCES Educators

	n	Minimum	Maximum	μ	σ
Year of birth of respondent	119	1943	1984	1964	10.12
Years as OCES educator	118	1.00	33.00	12.50	9.61
Number of educators or staff members per county	119	2.00	21.00	4.87	3.30

Note: n = number of respondents per question, μ = mean, σ = standard deviation. Entries less than 1.00 were categorized as 1.00.

Table 2

Decade of Birth for OCES Educators

Decade	n	%
1941 – 1950	4	3.20
1951 – 1960	53	42.70
1961 – 1970	30	24.00

Table 2 (cont.)

Decade	n	%
1971 – 1980	24	19.20
1981 – 1990	8	6.40
Non response	5	4.00
Total	124	100.00

Of the respondents (n = 124), 39 (31.50%) have a bachelor's degree as their highest academic degree, and 80 (64.50%) earned a master's degree. Of the respondents (n = 106), 25 (23.50%) indicated animal science as the academic area of their bachelor's degree; 14 (13.20%) respondents indicated agricultural education; and 14 (13.2%) indicated family and consumer sciences. Appendix I provides a complete list of academic areas from all respondents.

Sixteen (12.90%) respondents of 124 are pursuing advanced academic degrees. Of the respondents pursuing advanced degrees (n = 16), 4 (25.00%) are studying agricultural education; 3 (18.75%) are studying education; 2 (12.50%) are studying agriculture; 2 (12.50%) are studying human resources; and one (6.25%) response was made for each of the five following advanced degree areas: environmental sciences, gerontology, leisure management and education, master of science, and public administration.

Eighty-four (67.70%) of the respondents attended Oklahoma State University for their undergraduate degrees, while 37 (29.80%) did not. Three educators (2.40%) did not respond to this question. Appendix J provides a complete list of all universities listed as a response.

When indicating an Extension program area, respondents could enter more than one Extension area if they were an educator in more than one program area (see Table 3).

Table 3

Number of Educators per Extension Area

Extension Program Area	n	%
Agriculture	42	33.90
4-H	94	75.80
Family and Consumer Sciences	49	39.60
Horticulture	20	16.10
Other	16	12.10

Note: Respondents could select more than one area; therefore, total percentage is greater than 100.

The "other" program areas listed by respondents were rural development (n = 9); economic development (n = 2), community development (n = 3), and rural and economic development (n = 2).

The average number of years respondents (n = 118) have served as OCES educators was 12.50. The range was 1.00 to 33.00 years (see Table 1). The average number of educators per county was 4.87; the range of educators per county was 2 to 21

(see Table 1). Outliers for years as an OCES educator included 0.08, 0.33, and 0.58 years.

According to the personnel directory of the Division of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources (2008), OCES has 195 "educators" within the state's four districts: northeast, northwest, southeast, and southwest (refer to Figure 1). The northeast district has 60 educators. The northwest district has 37 educators. The southeast district has 43 educators, and the southwest district has 55 educators.

Of the respondents (n = 124), 47 (37.90%) were from the northeast district, 10 (8.10%) were from the northwest district; 28 (22.60%) were from the southeast district; and 36 (29.00%) were from the southwest district (see Table 4). These percentages were figured from the census (N = 204).

Table 4

OCES Educator Respondents by District

District Area	n	%
Northeast	47	37.90
Northwest	10	8.10
Southeast	28	22.60
Southwest	36	29.00
Non response	3	2.40
Total	124	100.00

Respondents were asked how satisfied they were with the amount of time they must devote to their jobs (See Table 5). Answer choices were: 1 = "very dissatisfied"; 2 = "dissatisfied"; 3 = "neutral"; 4 = "satisfied"; and 5 = "very satisfied." The real limits for this scaled item were 1.00 to 1.49 = "very dissatisfied," 1.50 to 1.99 = "dissatisfied," 2.00 to 2.49 = "dissatisfied," 2.50 – 2.99 = "neutral," 3.00 – 3.49 = "neutral," 3.50 to 3.99 = "satisfied," 4.00 to 4.49 = "satisfied," and 4.50 to 5.00 = "very satisfied."

Six (4.80%) educators were "very dissatisfied," 26 (21.00%) were "dissatisfied," 28 (22.60%) were "neutral," 50 (40.30%) were "satisfied," and 11 (8.90%) were "very satisfied" (see Table 5).

Table 5

OCES Educators' Satisfaction With Time Devoted to Job

Time on Job Satisfaction Ranking	N	%
Very Dissatisfied	6	4.80
Dissatisfied	26	21.00
Neutral	28	22.60
Satisfied	50	40.30
Very Satisfied	11	8.90
Non response	3	2.40
Total	124	100.00

Respondents were asked how closely their formal education related to their jobs (See Table 6). The real limits for this scaled item were 1.00 to 1.49 = "completely

unrelated," 1.50 to 1.99 = "only slightly related," 2.00 to 2.49 = "only slightly related," 2.50 to 2.99 = "moderately related," 3.00 to 3.49 = "moderately related," 3.50 to 3.99 = "closely related," 4.00 to 4.49 = "closely related," and 4.50 to 5.00 = "very closely related." Seven (5.60%) educators responded "completely unrelated," 11 (8.90%) responded "only slightly related," 30 (24.20%) responded "moderately related," 38 (30.60%) responded "closely related," and 34 (27.40%) responded "very closely related" (see Table 6).

Table 6

OCES Educators' Perception of Education/Job Relationship

	n	%
Completely unrelated	7	5.60
Only slightly related	11	8.90
Moderately related	30	24.20
Closely related	38	30.60
Very closely related	34	27.40
Non response	4	3.20
Total	124	100.00

Respondents were asked to select three areas that best define his or her counties' most significant challenges. Respondents were able to choose up to three areas; 120 selected one challenge, 118 selected two challenges, and 107 selected three challenges.

"Increasing capacity to reach new and diverse audiences" was perceived as a challenge by 82 educators; 48 perceived "selecting budgeting/funding" as a challenge; and 37 perceived "generating positive visibility for Extension" as a challenge (see Table 7).

Table 7

Educators' Perceived Challenges for OCES

Challenge	n
Increasing capacity to reach new and diverse audiences	82
Budgeting/funding	48
Generating positive visibility for Extension	37
Prioritizing programs	35
Coordinating efforts and resources from various Extension programs	31
Communicating a consistent brand or message for Extension	30
Attracting more minorities to agriculture	27
Staffing/personnel issues	25
Linking Extension to programs at OSU	11
Communications with government/state officials	10
Communications with local officials	9

Findings of Objective 2

The second objective of this study was to determine the marketing and communications efforts being conducted by Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service educators.

Four questions were included in the survey instrument to answer objective 2: 1) How many hours per month do you spend on marketing and communications activities or efforts; 2) Please select the three constituent groups where you focus most of your communications and marketing efforts; 3) Please rate the following items as perceived effectiveness of your county programming efforts, using the following scale with 10 items listed with a five-point scale; 4) Enter the frequency of use per year for method of communication or marketing with the 15 methods listed.

The range of hours OCES educators (n = 117) spent marketing and communicating per month was 2 to 180. The average hours respondents spent per month was 15.13 (see Tables 8 and 9). Two outliers for hours spent per month marketing and communicating were 120 and 180 and were considered unusable answers, with the next closest response being 40 hours.

Table 8

OCES Educators' Time Spent Marketing and Communicating per Month

	n	Minimum	Maximum	μ	σ
Hours Spent on Marketing and Communications per Month	117	2	40	15.13	9.38

Note: n = number of respondents per question, μ = mean, σ = standard deviation.

Table 9

Frequency of Reported Hours Spent Marketing and Communicating per Month

Hours	n
0 - 5	11
6 - 10	43
11 - 15	16
16 - 20	25
21 - 25	8
26 - 30	3
31 - 35	1
36 - 40	8
>40	2
Non response	7
Total	124

Respondents were asked to select the three constituent groups on which they focus most of their communications and marketing efforts. Of the respondents, 120 selected three constituent groups on which they focus most of their communications and marketing efforts, two respondents selected two constituents, and two respondents selected one constituent. The three constituent groups chosen by respondents were "youth residents," (n = 71); "adult residents," (n = 67); and the "general public," (n = 57) (see Table 10). Other constituent group areas were entered by 10 educators: families, Master

Gardeners, Oklahoma Home and Community Education participants, school systems, and small to large horticulture/agriculture producers.

Table 10

Constituent Groups on Which Communications and Marketing Efforts are Focused as Perceived by OCES Educators

Constituent Groups	n
Youth Residents	71
Adult Residents	67
General public	57
Clients and customers	49
Community leaders	34
Agricultural groups and organizations	29
County and state government elected/appointed officials	28
Media	11
Other	10
Businesses	6
Individual decision makers varied according to program	2

Respondents rated ten items for perceived effectiveness of their county programming efforts (see Table 11), using the following scale: 1 = "do not do," 2 = "ineffective," 3 = "somewhat ineffective," 4 = "somewhat effective," and 5 = "effective."

The real limits for this scaled item were 1.00 to 1.49 = "do not do," 1.50 to 1.99 = "ineffective," 2.00 to 2.49 = "ineffective," 2.50 to 2.99 = "somewhat ineffective," 3.00 to 3.49 = "somewhat ineffective," 3.50 to 3.99 = "somewhat effective," 4.00 to 4.49 = "somewhat effective," and 4.50 to 5.00 = "effective."

Four items were "somewhat effective": "media relations and news releases" (μ = 4.38), "article placement, such as columns in newspapers and magazines" (μ = 4.03), "direct mail – public relations and/or public service announcements" (μ = 4.31), and "exhibits" (μ = 3.92). Two items were perceived as "somewhat ineffective": "online promotion" (μ = 2.77) and "Web site development or maintenance" (μ = 3.02). Four items were perceived as "ineffective": "radio – broadcast news" (μ = 2.44), "radio – public service announcements" (μ = 2.45), "TV – broadcast news" (μ = 1.77), and "TV – public service announcements" (μ = 1.68). OCES educators perceived media relations, article placement, and direct mail as effective county programming efforts.

Respondents were asked the frequency of use per year for each method of communications or marketing. The 15 items and the OCES educators' responses are presented in Table 12.

For each item, the number of respondents (n) and the mean (μ) is reported for each method. The three methods most frequently used by respondents were "newspaper – write a story for publication," n = 106 and μ = 35.98; "e-mail – focused communications effort on a topic or program," n = 87 and μ = 33.66; and "Extension flier or newsletter – write, edit," n = 102 and μ = 14.03. The three methods least used by respondents were "magazine – write a story for publication (specialized, general)," n = 97 and μ = 0.79; "television – create, produce (short feature or spot)," n = 98 and μ = 0.47;

and “magazine – participated in an interview (face-to-face, telephone, e-mail),” n = 98 and $\mu = 0.32$.

Findings of Objective 3

The third objective of this study was to determine the mass communication methods available to Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service educators.

The following four questions were included in the survey instrument to answer Objective 3; 1) For your county, where is the nearest newspaper published; 2) For your county, where is the nearest radio station; 3) For your county, where is the nearest television station; 4) For your county, where is the nearest multi–media agency (that would be able to produce public relations, advertising, electronic media, Web sites, etc.)?

Of the educators who responded (n = 121) to their access to newspaper publishing, 113 (91.10%) have access “in town,” 7 (5.60%) have access “in county,” and 2 (1.60%) in an “adjacent county” (see Table 13).

Of the educators who responded (n = 122) to their access to a radio station, 60 (48.40%) have access “in town,” 13 (10.50%) access “in county,” 44 (35.50%) in an “adjacent county,” and 3 (2.40%) in a “non-adjacent county.” Two (1.60%) respondents said they did not know where the nearest radio station was located (“unknown”).

Of the educators who responded (n = 122) to their access to a television station, 29 (23.40%) responded access “in town,” 3 (2.40%) “in county,” 36 (29.00%) in an “adjacent county,” and 49 (39.50%) in a “non-adjacent county.” Four (3.20%) respondents said they did not know where the nearest television station was located (“unknown”).

Of the educators who responded (n = 121) to their access to a multi–media agency, 38 (30.60%) responded access “in town,” 10 (8.10%) “in county,” 30 (24.20%) “adjacent county,” and 15 (12.10%) reported access in a “non-adjacent county.” Twenty-eight (22.60%) respondents said they did not know where the nearest multi–media agency was located (“unknown”).

Table 11

Perceived Effectiveness of OCES Respondents' County Programming Efforts

Medium	Effective		Somewhat Effective		Somewhat Ineffective		Ineffective		Do Not Do		n	μ	σ
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%			
Media Relations	51	41.10	63	50.80	6	4.80	0	0.00	0	0.00	120	4.38	0.581
Article placement	39	31.50	61	49.20	12	9.70	1	0.80	7	5.60	120	4.03	0.995
Radio – broadcast	12	9.70	30	24.20	12	9.70	8	6.50	56	45.20	118	2.44	1.528
Radio – public service announcements	10	8.10	30	24.20	16	12.90	8	6.50	53	42.70	117	2.45	1.483
TV– broadcast	4	3.20	17	13.70	8	6.50	6	4.80	81	65.30	116	1.77	1.274
TV – public service announcements	2	1.60	14	11.30	10	8.10	8	6.50	80	64.50	114	1.68	1.162
Online promotion	4	3.20	43	34.70	28	22.60	6	4.80	36	29.00	117	2.77	1.322
Web site development or maintenance	5	4.00	58	46.80	19	15.30	8	6.50	29	23.40	119	3.02	1.308
Direct mail	56	45.20	51	41.10	6	4.80	2	1.60	3	2.40	118	4.31	0.854
Exhibits	24	19.40	70	56.50	21	16.90	2	1.60	3	2.40	120	3.92	0.816

Note: n = number of respondents, μ = mean, and σ = standard deviation

Table 12

Statistical Data for Frequency of Use of Method per Year

Medium	n	Minimum	Maximum	μ	σ
Newspaper – write a story for publication	106	0	260	35.98	39.83
E-mail – focused communications effort on a topic or program	87	0	200	33.66	50.87
Extension flier or newsletter – write, edit	102	0	50	14.03	11.10
Electronic media – use (CDs, DVDs, audio tapes, video tapes, satellite conferences)	99	0	120	11.86	17.15
Web sites – create, maintain, contribute information	98	0	75	8.04	13.98
Exhibits – use, create, produce	101	0	100	7.69	10.86
Newspaper – participated in an interview	105	0	45	5.63	7.00
Radio – create, produce	101	0	100	5.49	15.27
Radio – participated in an interview	101	0	40	3.26	6.32
Electronic media – create (CDs, DVDs, audio tapes, video tapes, satellite conferences)	99	0	20	2.04	3.54
Television – participated in an interview	101	0	15	1.03	2.48
Magazine – write a story for publication (specialized, general)	97	0	15	0.79	2.53
Television – create, produce	98	0	26	0.47	2.90
Magazine – participated in an interview (face-to-face, telephone, e-mail)	98	0	5	0.32	0.85

Note: n = number of respondents, μ = mean, and σ = standard deviation. Methods are in order by mean.

Table 13

Nearest Available Mass Communications Outlet or Agency

Media outlet and agency percentage shown	In Town	In County	Adjacent County	Non-adjacent County	Unknown
Newspaper Publishing	91.10	5.60	1.60	0.00	0.00
Radio Station	48.40	10.50	35.50	2.40	1.60
Television Station	23.40	2.40	29.00	39.50	3.20
Multi-media Agency	30.60	8.10	24.20	12.10	22.6

Findings of Objective 4

The purpose of objective four was to determine the perceived needs of Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service educators for training and resources to enhance their abilities to market and communicate OCES's purpose, programs, and activities effectively.

The following seven questions were included in the survey instrument to answer Objective 4: 1) What is your preference as a delivery method to reach your audience; 2) Rate your personal skill for each medium; 3) What sources of mass communication skill training have you had; 4) Do you desire additional training; 5) Select five training areas you would most likely attend; 6) What references do you use regarding writing, communicating, and the media; 7) Please give any other suggestions or comments to the researcher concerning Extension's media efforts (see Table 14).

Educators were asked to rate 15 delivery methods to reach their audiences using the following scale: 1 = "not a preference"; 2 = "low preference"; 3 = "medium preference"; and 4 = "high preference." The real limits for this scaled item were 1.00 to 1.49 = "not a preference," 1.50 to 1.99 = "low preference," 2.00 to 2.49 = "low preference," 2.50 to 2.99 = "medium preference," 3.00 to 3.49 = "medium preference," and 3.50 to 4.00 = "high preference."

Respondents gave "high preference" to "newspaper – write a story for publication," n = 122 and $\mu = 3.57$; and "Extension flier or newsletter – write, edit," n = 120 and $\mu = 3.57$.

Respondents gave "medium preference to "e-mail – focused communications effort on a topic or program," n = 110 and $\mu = 3.33$; "Web sites – create, maintain, contribute information," n = 114 and $\mu = 3.19$; "exhibits – use, create, produce (visual aids, window displays, booths, fair)," n = 120 and $\mu = 3.09$; "electronic media – use (CDs, DVDs, audio tapes, video tapes, satellite conferences)," n = 113 and $\mu = 3.01$; and "newspaper – participated in an interview (face-to-face, telephone, e-mail)," n = 123 and $\mu = 2.80$.

Respondents gave a "low preference" for "electronic media – create (CDs, DVDs, audio tapes, video tapes, satellite conferences)," n = 113 and $\mu = 3.01$; "radio – create, produce (short feature or spot)," n = 110 and $\mu = 2.28$; "radio – participated in an interview (face-to-face, telephone, e-mail)," n = 114 and $\mu = 2.34$; "television – participated in an interview (face-to-face, telephone, e-mail)," n = 108 and $\mu = 2.17$; "magazine – write a story for publication (specialized, general)," n = 107 and $\mu = 1.76$; "television – create, produce (short feature or spot)," n = 104 and $\mu = 1.88$; "professional

publication – write an article for publication (Extension journal, research journal)," n = 106 and μ = 1.76; and "magazine – participated in an interview (face-to-face, telephone, e-mail)," n = 109 and μ = 1.83.

Table 14

Preference of Delivery Methods to Reach OCES Educators' Audiences

Delivery Method	n	μ	σ
Newspaper – write a story for publication	122	3.57	0.61
Extension flier or newsletter – write, edit	120	3.57	0.69
E-mail – focused communications effort on a topic or program	110	3.33	0.77
Web sites – create, maintain, contribute information	114	3.19	0.87
Exhibits – use, create, produce	120	3.09	0.71
Electronic media – use (CDs, DVDs, audio tapes, video tapes, satellite conferences)	113	3.01	0.95
Newspaper – participated in an interview	123	2.80	0.80
Electronic media – create (CDs, DVDs, audio tapes, video tapes, satellite conferences)	106	2.43	1.07
Radio – participated in an interview	114	2.34	1.01
Radio – create, produce	110	2.28	1.00
Television – participated in an interview	108	2.17	1.06
Magazine – write a story for publication (specialized, general)	107	1.94	0.97
Television – create, produce	104	1.88	0.97
Magazine – participated in an interview (face-to-face, telephone, e-mail)	109	1.83	0.84
Professional publication – write an article for publication (Extension journal, research journal)	106	1.76	0.85

Note: n = number of respondents, μ = mean, and σ = standard deviation. Method preferences are in order from highest mean to lowest mean.

Respondents rated their perceived skill base for the following 15 communications methods (see Table 15) using the following scale: 1 = "no experience," 2 = "poor," 3 = "less than adequate," 4 = "adequate," 5 = "more than adequate," and 6 = "excellent."

Table 15

Personal Skill Rating for Communications Media

Medium	n	μ	σ
Extension flier or newsletter – write, edit	120	4.74	0.96
Newspaper – write a story for publication	123	4.63	0.69
E-mail – focused communications effort on a topic or program	111	4.60	0.92
Exhibits – use, create, produce	120	4.55	0.95
Newspaper – participated in an interview	123	4.24	0.96
Electronic media – use (CDs, DVDs, audio tapes, video tapes, satellite conferences)	115	3.89	1.30
Radio – participated in an interview	115	3.77	1.31
Radio – create, produce	113	3.43	1.42
Web sites – create, maintain, contribute information	113	3.23	1.32
Electronic media – create (CDs, DVDs, audio tapes, video tapes, satellite conferences)	110	3.19	1.45
Television – participated in an interview	109	3.08	1.54
Magazine – write a story for publication	107	2.83	1.59
Magazine – participated in an interview	111	2.77	1.57
Professional publication – write an article for publication (Extension journal, research journal)	108	2.73	1.48
Television – create, produce	107	2.53	1.46

Note: n = number of respondents, μ = mean, and σ = standard deviation. Method preferences are in order from highest mean to lowest mean.

Educators identified their levels of training for the 15 media methods by choosing from the following seven levels of training: "prior professional employment," "graduate studies," "undergraduate," "in-service/workshop," "experience (self-taught)," "other," and "none." Educators could select all levels of training that applied for each method (See Table 16).

Respondents indicated their desire for additional training in the 15 communications methods by circling "yes" or "no" for each method. The methods and the respondents' requests for training are shown in Table 17.

Educators were asked to select the five training areas they would most likely attend of the 15 methods. They selected the five areas by marking the five boxes that matched what they would most likely attend and leaving others blank (See Table 18). The three most frequent requests for training were "Web sites – create, maintain, contribute information" (n = 72); "electronic media – create (CDs, DVDs, audio tapes, video tapes, satellite conferences) (n = 48); and "newspaper – write a story for publication" (n = 42). The three training areas least frequently chosen by respondents were "newspaper – participated in an interview (face-to-face, telephone, e-mail)" (n = 15); "magazine – write a story for publication (specialized, general)" (n = 15); and "magazine – participated in an interview (face-to-face, telephone, e-mail)" (n = 2).

Of the respondents, 91 (73.38%) listed references they use regarding writing, communicating, and the media (see Appendix K), including original responses categorized by the researcher: 4-H; OSU Agricultural Communications Services; style guides and dictionaries; area, departmental, and state specialists; Centra Training, in-

service training, and Career Tech Training; OSU Extension and OSU; fact sheets; internet; none; news releases; and spell check.

Of the respondents, 40 wrote suggestions or comments to the researcher concerning Extension's media efforts. Appendix L provides a complete list of suggestions and comments regarding OCES media efforts.

Table 16

Source of Mass Communication Skill Training

Medium	Prior Prof. Employ-ment	Graduate Studies	Under-graduate	In-Service/ Workshop	Experience	Other	None
Newspaper – write a story for publication	30	26	53	56	74	2	5
Newspaper – participated in an interview	22	16	31	29	61	5	22
Radio – create, produce	15	12	17	16	47	5	40
Radio – participated in an interview	17	10	20	12	51	6	33
Television – create, produce	7	8	10	8	22	1	60
Television – participated in an interview	11	8	14	12	39	3	43
E-mail – focused communications effort on a topic or program	18	13	22	35	73	3	7
Web sites – create, maintain, contribute information	9	7	15	37	44	4	26
Exhibits – use, create, produce	21	22	40	55	75	7	6
Professional publication – write an article for publication (Extension journal, research journal)	9	32	18	11	23	1	44
Magazine – write a story for publication	12	12	18	12	28	2	54
Magazine – participated in an interview	9	12	18	9	28	2	55
Extension flier or newsletter – write, edit	29	23	37	60	81	4	4

Table 16, continued

Medium	Prior Prof. Employ-ment	Graduate Studies	Under-graduate	In-Service/ Workshop	Experience	Other	None
Electronic media – use (CDs, DVDs, audio tapes, video tapes, satellite conferences)	19	11	16	28	66	2	22
Electronic media – create (CDs, DVDs, audio tapes, video tapes, satellite conferences)	11	7	12	17	45	3	44

Note: The frequencies are not entered as a percentage.

Table 17

Additional Training Desired by OCES Educators

Medium	n	Yes		No	
		n	%	n	%
Web sites – create, maintain, contribute information	115	91	73.40	24	19.40
Electronic media – create (CDs, DVDs, audio tapes, video tapes, satellite conferences)	112	67	54.00	45	36.30
Electronic media – use (CDs, DVDs, audio tapes, video tapes, satellite conferences)	112	65	52.40	47	37.90
Newspaper – write a story for publication	119	59	47.60	60	48.40
Extension flier or newsletter – write, edit	118	57	46.00	61	49.20
Radio – create, produce	111	53	42.70	58	46.80
E-mail – focused communications effort on a topic or program	107	51	41.10	56	45.20
Television – participated in an interview	108	49	39.50	59	47.60
Exhibits – use, create, produce	112	49	39.50	63	50.80
Newspaper – participated in an interview	113	47	37.90	66	53.20
Radio – participated in an interview	109	47	37.90	62	50.00
Professional publication – write an article for publication (Extension journal, research journal)	106	45	36.30	61	49.20
Television – create, produce	106	44	35.50	62	50.00
Magazine – write a story for publication	103	38	30.60	65	52.40
Magazine – participated in an interview	104	29	23.40	75	60.50

Note: Items are listed in order of preferred training.

Table 18

Training Areas OCES Educators Would Most Likely Attend

Medium	
Web sites – create, maintain, contribute information	72
Electronic media – create (CDs, DVDs, audio tapes, video tapes, satellite conferences)	48
Newspaper – write a story for publication	42
Extension flier or newsletter – write, edit	37
Electronic media – use (CDs, DVDs, audio tapes, video tapes, satellite conferences)	35
E-mail – focused communications effort on a topic or program	31
Exhibits – use, create, produce	30
Radio – create, produce	27
Radio – participated in an interview	21
Television – participated in an interview	21
Professional publication – write an article for publication (Extension journal, research journal)	20
Television – create, produce	19
Newspaper – participated in an interview	15
Magazine – write a story for publication	15
Magazine – participated in an interview	2

Notes: Media were sorted from highest to lowest frequency.

Findings of Objective 5

The fifth objective of this study was to determine the relationship between selected personal and professional characteristics of Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service educators and their perceived communication efforts.

To obtain the findings for this objective, correlations between selected professional and personal characteristics of OCES educators were calculated. Preferred delivery methods of communication and marketing of the OCES educators and personal skills of educators were the independent variables; year of birth or years as an OCES educator were the dependent variables (see Table 22). The dependent variable was calculated using Spearman's rank order coefficient, r_s. After data were analyzed, the magnitude of correlations was described using Davis' (1971) descriptions. Tables 19 – 22 provide the significant relationships.

A low negative relationship exists between the educators' preferred communications delivery methods and their years of birth for the following methods: "newspaper – write a story for publication," $r_s = -0.25$, $p < 0.01$; "newspaper – participated in an interview," $r_s = -0.23$, $p < 0.01$; "television – participated in an interview," $r_s = -0.25$; and use of electronic media, $r_s = -0.120$. A low positive relationship exists between the use of Web sites, $r_s = 0.17$, as a preferred delivery method and year of birth.

Table 19

Relationships Between Preferred Delivery Method and OCES Educators Year of Birth

Independent Variables	Dependent Variable		Interpretation
	r_s	p	
Newspaper – write a story for publication	- 0.25	< 0.01	negative & low
Newspaper – participated in an interview	- 0.23	< 0.01	negative & low
Television – participated in an interview	-0.14		negative & low
Web sites	0.17		positive & low
Electronic Media – use	-0.12		negative & low

Note. r_s = Spearman's rank order coefficient; $p < 0.05$ = correlation is significant at the .05 level, $p < 0.01$= correlation is significant at the .01 level. If no p value is given, the numbers had no significant correlation.

A low positive relationship exists between the educators' preferred communications delivery methods and their years as an OCES educator for the following methods (see Table 20): "newspaper – write a story for publication," $r_s = 0.14$; newspaper – participated in an interview," $r_s = 0.16$; "radio – participated in an interview," $r_s = 0.12$; and "television – participated in an interview," $r_s = 0.19$. A low negative relationship exists for the use of television – create produce, $r_s = -0.11$, as a preferred delivery method and respondents' years as an OCES educator.

Table 20

Relationships Between Preferred Delivery Method and Years as OCES Educator

Independent Variables	Dependent Variable r_s		Interpretation
	r_s	p	
Newspaper – write a story for publication	0.14		positive & low
Newspaper – participated in an interview	0.16		positive & low
Radio – participated in an interview	0.12		positive & low
Television – create and produce	-0.11		negative & low
Television – participated in an interview	0.19		positive & low

Note. r_s = Spearman's rank order coefficient; $p < 0.05$ = correlation is significant at the .05 level, $p < 0.01$= correlation is significant at the .01 level. If no p value is given, the numbers had no significant correlation.

A low positive relationship between exists the educators' personal skill ratings and their years as an OCES educator for the following methods (see Table 21): "newspaper – write a story for publication," $r_s = 0.28$, $p < 0.01$; "newspaper – participated in an interview," $r_s = 0.23$, $p < 0.01$; "radio – participated in an interview," $r_s = 0.22$, $p < 0.05$; "television – participated in an interview," $r_s = 0.28$, $p < 0.01$; "exhibits," $r_s = 0.18$, $p < 0.05$; "magazine – participated in an interview," $r_s = 0.11$; and "Extension flier or newsletter," $r_s = 0.18$, $p < 0.05$. A low negative relationship exists for the use of e-mail, $r_s = -0.12$ and Web sites, $r_s = -0.11$ as a personal skill rating and respondents' years as an OCES educator.

Table 21

Relationships Between Personal Skill for Each Communication Medium and Years as OCES Educator

Independent Variables	Dependent Variable		Interpretation
	r_s	*p*	
Newspaper – write a story for publication	0.28	< 0.01	positive & low
Newspaper – participated in an interview	0.29	< 0.01	positive & low
Radio – participated in an interview	0.22	< 0.05	positive & low
Television – participated in an interview	0.28	< 0.01	positive & low
E-mail	-0.12		negative & low
Web sites	-0.11		negative & low
Exhibits	0.18	< 0.05	positive & low
Magazine – participated in an interview	0.11		positive & low
Extension flier or newsletter	0.18	< 0.01	positive & low

Note. r_s = Spearman's rank order coefficient; $p < 0.05$ = correlation is significant at the .05 level, $p < 0.01$= correlation is significant at the .01 level. If no *p* value is given, the numbers had no significant correlation.

A moderate positive relationship between educators' skill ratings and their years of birth for Web sites, $r_s = 0.40$, and $p < 0.01$ (see Table 22). A low positive relationship exists between the educators' personal skill ratings and their year of birth for the following methods: e-mail, $r_s = 0.20$, and $p < 0.05$; professional publications, $r_s = 0.11$; and "magazine – participated in an interview," $r_s = 0.10$. A low negative relationship exists for the personal skill rating and year of birth for the following methods:

"newspaper – participated in an interview," r_s = -0.15 and "television – participated in an interview," r_s = -0.16.

Table 22

Relationships Between Personal Skill for Each Communication Medium and OCES Educators' Year of Birth

Independent Variables	Dependent Variable		Interpretation
	r_s	*p*	
Newspaper – participated in an interview	-0.15		negative & low
Television – participated in an interview	-0.16		negative & low
E-mail	0.20	< 0.05	positive & low
Web	0.40	< 0.01	positive & moderate
Professional Publication	0.11		positive & low
Magazine – participated in an interview	0.10		positive & low

Note. r_s = Spearman's rank order coefficient; $p < 0.05$ = correlation is significant at the .05 level, $p < 0.01$= correlation is significant at the .01 level. If no *p* value is given, the numbers had no significant correlation.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

Chapter I addressed the significance and need of this study. Assessing the personal and professional characteristics, communication efforts, media sources, and resources of OCES educators will allow development of effective training and resource materials for OCES educators. This assessment will establish a benchmark toward discovering what OCES administrators should develop to improve communications and marketing planning, resources, and training tools for county educators.

Chapter II provided a review of literature that supported this research study, including an overview of (1) the Cooperative Extension Service, (2) integrated marketing communications, (3) needs assessments and surveys, and (4) explanation of the chosen theoretical framework, including Bandura's self-efficacy and Knowles' andragogy.

Chapter III addressed the methods used to conduct this study, including reliability and validity testing. The population, as well as the setting in which the survey took place, were described. Of the 204 OCES educators who registered for the statewide DASNR/Extension conference held January 22-24, 2008, at Oklahoma State University, in Stillwater, Oklahoma, 124 submitted a completed survey instrument.

Chapter IV presented the findings of the study. The findings represented respondents' perceptions of their communications and marketing efforts, training needs, and resources. These findings were grouped by objective for interpretation of this study.

Statement of the Problem

Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service (OCES) educators should have the proper resources and training to communicate and market OCES efficiently and effectively; however, OCES has no well-defined vision or plan available for its educators. Therefore, this study provides benchmark research to identify the perceived needs of educators regarding communications efforts, media sources, and resources to allow development of effective training and resource materials for OCES educators.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine the perceptions of Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service educators regarding their communications and marketing efforts, training needs, and resources.

Objectives

For the purpose of this study, the following objectives were developed:

1. To describe selected personal and professional characteristics of Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service educators.
2. To determine the marketing and communications efforts being conducted by Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service educators.

3. To determine the mass communication methods available to Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service educators.
4. To determine the perceived needs of Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service educators for training and resources to enhance their abilities to market and communicate OCES's purpose, programs, and activities effectively.
5. To determine the relationship between selected personal and professional characteristics of Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service educators and their perceived communications efforts.

Summary of Findings

Of the OCES educators who attended the statewide DASNR/Extension conference held January 22-24, 2008, in Stillwater, Oklahoma, 124 of 204 educators registered for the conference submitted a completed survey instrument, including respondents who mailed their surveys after the conference. Data were gathered and analyzed using descriptive statistics. After finding no statistical differences in early and late respondents, the survey response rate was 60.78%.

Selected Personal and Professional Characteristics of Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service Educators

Of the respondents, 58.90% were female. The average year of birth for the respondents was 1964.

Eighty (64.50%) of the respondents earned a master's degree. The academic area of animal science was selected by 25 (23.50%) respondents for their bachelor's degrees; 14 (13.20%) respondents indicated agricultural education; and 14 (13.20%) indicated family and consumer sciences. Of the respondents (n = 124), 16 (12.90%) are pursuing advanced academic degrees. Of the respondents pursuing advanced degrees (n = 16), educators are studying agricultural education, education, agriculture, human resources, environmental sciences, gerontology, leisure management and education, master of science, and public administration.

Of the respondents, 84 (67.70%) attended Oklahoma State University for their undergraduate degrees.

When indicating an Extension program area, respondents could enter more than one Extension area if they were an educator in more than one area. The program areas selected the most were 4-H (n = 94), family and consumer sciences (n = 49), and agriculture (n = 42).

The average number of years respondents (n = 118) have served as an OCES educator was 12.50. The average number of educators per county was 4.87. However, because of known demographics, the researcher suggested this number included paraprofessionals and/or support staff in addition to Extension educators.

Respondents were asked how satisfied they are with the amount of time they must devote to their jobs. Six (4.80%) educators were "very dissatisfied," 26 (21.00%) were "dissatisfied," 28 (22.60%) were "neutral," 50 (40.30%) were "satisfied," and 11 (8.90%) were "very satisfied" (see Table 5).

Respondents were asked how closely their formal educations related to their jobs; 30 (24.20%) responded "moderately related," 38 (30.60%) responded "closely related," and 34 (27.40%) responded "very closely related."

Respondents selected three areas that best define their counties most significant challenges: "increasing capacity to reach new and diverse audiences" (n = 82); "selecting budgeting/funding" (n = 48); and "generating positive visibility for Extension" (n = 37).

Marketing and Communications Efforts Being Conducted by Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service Educators

The average number of hours respondents spent per month on communicating and marketing efforts was 15.13.

The largest number of respondents selected three constituent groups on which they focus most of their communications and marketing efforts: "youth residents," "adult residents," and the "general public."

Respondents rated items for perceived effectiveness of their county programming efforts. Four items were "somewhat effective": "media relations and news releases" (μ = 4.38), "article placement, such as columns in newspapers and magazines" (μ = 4.03), "direct mail – public relations and/or public service announcements" (μ = 4.31), and "exhibits" (μ = 3.92). Two items were perceived as "somewhat ineffective": "online promotion" (μ = 2.77) and "Web site development or maintenance" (μ = 3.02).

Four items were perceived as "ineffective": "radio – broadcast news" (μ = 2.44), "radio – public service announcements" (μ = 2.45), "TV – broadcast news" (μ = 1.77), and "TV – public service announcements" (μ = 1.68). OCES educators perceived media relations, article placement, and direct mail as "effective" county programming efforts.

Respondents were asked their frequency of use per year for each method of communications or marketing. The highest frequency was reported by respondents for the following methods: "e-mail focused on a topic or program" ($\mu = 113.16$), writing a story for a newspaper ($\mu = 35.98$), and "Extension fliers or newsletters" ($\mu = 14.03$).

Perceived Mass Communication Methods Available to Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service Educators

Of the educators who responded about their accessibility to newspaper publishing, 113 (91.10%) have access "in town." Sixty (48.40%) educators have access to a radio station "in town," and 44 (35.5%) have access in an "adjacent county." Thirty-six (29.00%) educators have access to a television station in an "adjacent county," and 49 (39.50%) have access in a "non–adjacent county." Thirty-eight (30.60%) educators have access to a multi–media agency "in town," and 30 (24.20%) have access in an "adjacent county."

Perceived Needs of OCES Educators for Training and Resources to Enhance Their Abilities to Market and Communicate OCES's Purpose, Programs, and Activities Effectively

Educators were asked to select their preferred method to reach their audiences. Respondents preferred to write stories for a newspaper ($\mu = 3.57$), develop an "Extension flier or newsletter" ($\mu = 3.57$), or e-mail their audiences ($\mu = 3.33$).

Respondents perceive their highest skills in communicating and marketing are writing a story for a newspaper ($\mu = 4.63$), developing an "Extension flier or newsletter" ($\mu = 4.74$), or communicating via e-mail ($\mu = 4.6$).

Educators have had no training in the areas of creating or producing television features (n = 60), participating in television interviews (n = 43), writing for a professional publication (research journal) (n = 44), and participating in an interview for a magazine (n = 55).

OCES educators responded they do "desire additional training" in the following areas: Web site development (n = 91), creating electronic media (n = 67), and using electronic media (n = 65). Educators do not "desire additional training" in the following areas: participating in an interview for a magazine (n = 75), participating in an interview for a newspaper (n = 66), and writing a story for a magazine (n = 65).

The five training areas OCES educators selected they "would most likely attend" were Web site development (n = 72), creating electronic media (n = 48), writing for a newspaper story (n = 42), writing or editing an Extension flier or newsletter (n = 37), and using electronic media (n = 35).

Forty respondents wrote suggestions or comments to the researcher concerning Extension's media efforts. Appendix L provides a complete list of suggestions and comments regarding OCES media efforts.

Relationship Between Selected Personal Characteristics of Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service Educators and Their Perceived Communications Efforts

A low negative relationship exists between the educators' preferred communications delivery methods and their years of birth for the following methods: "newspaper – write a story for publication," r_s = - 0.255, and $p < 0.01$; and "newspaper – participated in an interview," r_s = - 0.239, and $p < 0.01$.

A low positive relationship between the educators' personal skill rating and their years as an OCES educator for the following methods: "newspaper – write a story for publication," $r_s = 0.280$, and $p < 0.01$; "newspaper – participated in an interview," r_s = 0.239, and $p < 0.01$; "radio – participated in an interview," $r_s = 0.227$, and $p < 0.05$; "television – participated in an interview," $r_s = 0.285$, and $p < 0.01$; "exhibits, $r_s = 0.185$, and $p < 0.05$; and "Extension flier or newsletter," $r_s = 0.185$, and $p < 0.05$.

A moderate positive relationship exists between the educators' skill rating and their year of birth for Web sites, $r_s = 0.404$, and $p < 0.01$. A low positive relationship exists between the educators' personal skill rating and their year of birth: e-mail, r_s = 0.207, and $p < 0.05$.

Conclusions

The conclusions for this study were developed by the researcher from the data regarding OCES educators. Limitations stated in Chapter 1 were considered. Based upon the findings of this study, the following is a description of the "average" OCES educator.

The majority of OCES educator respondents were female. Forty-nine (39.51%) educators were at least 50 years old. Respondents have been OCES educators for an average of 12.50 years, and 4.87 staff members work in each county. Most educators

have a master's degree and attended Oklahoma State University. The educators' prior education and job field is "closely related" to their current position. "Increasing capacity to reach new and diverse audiences" is the greatest challenge faced as an OCES educator. Extension educators' program areas are 4-H, family and consumer sciences, and agriculture.

Respondents perceived spending 11.00% of their time per month marketing and communicating Extension programs to their audiences. They focus that time on the following constituent groups: youth residents, adult residents, and the general public. OCES educators perceived media relations, article placement, and direct mail as effective county programming efforts. Educators used the following methods the most during the year: e-mail focused on a topic or program, writing a story for a newspaper, and Extension fliers or newsletters.

A majority of respondents have access to a newspaper publisher in town, a radio station in town, a television station in a non-adjacent county, and a multi–media agency in town.

Respondents mostly preferred to use a story written for a newspaper, an Extension flier or newsletter, or e-mail to reach their audiences. This finding of preferred communication methods is similar to that of the study created to identify the mass communication delivery methods used and possessed by Extension agents in West Virginia (Neehouse, 2005).

Educators perceived their highest skills in communicating and marketing are writing a story for a newspaper, developing an Extension flier or newsletter, or communicating via e-mail. This finding of perceived skills is similar to that of the study

created to identify the mass communication delivery methods used and possessed by Extension agents in West Virginia (Neehouse, 2005).

Professional experience has provided Extension educators the training they have received in communications and marketing. Educators have not had training in the areas of creating or producing television features, participating in television interviews, writing for a professional publication (research journal), and participating in an interview for a magazine. West Virginia Extension agents also received their training from experience (Neehouse, 2005).

Respondents desire training in the areas of Web site maintenance, creating electronic media, and using electronic media. Nearly one–half of West Virginia Extension agents also requested training in Internet or Web–based uses (Neehouse, 2005). Respondents do not want training in the following areas: participating in an interview for a magazine, participating in an interview for a newspaper, and writing a story for magazine. Respondents also indicated they use these three areas less frequently, which suggests why they have less interest in these types of training.

Respondents desire more training in Web site development, creating electronic media, writing for a newspaper story, writing or editing an Extension flier or newsletter, and using electronic media.

OCES educators listed references they use regarding writing, communicating, and working with the media; respondents often use OSU Agricultural Communications Services and OSU fact sheets as resources.

Educators were interested in the area of communications and marketing and are willing to try new resources and training. Some indicated that marketing and

communications efforts have been neglected and would like to ensure that more effort is made to make sure Oklahoma knows and understands the purpose of the Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service.

The older an Extension educator is the more likely he or she is to prefer the use of newspaper articles as a delivery method to reach an audience. The longer a person has been an educator for OCES the higher his or her perceived personal skill rating is for using newspaper articles and television interviews as media methods. This, along with the age demographic, supports the respondents' perceptions that their strongest skill is writing newspaper articles and, therefore, their most preferred communications and marketing method.

The younger the Extension educator the higher his or her perceived personal skill rating for the use of Web sites and Web site maintenance. As a result, the educator can better develop a positive relationship with younger clients, such as 4-H members. Also related to this finding, respondents showed a high preference for training in the areas of Web sites and electronic media.

Recommendations for Practice

The recommendations for this study were developed by the researcher from this study and for OCES educators.

Of the educators who responded to this study, 49 educators were above the age of 50 and are approaching retirement. Throughout the next 10 years, this will present a significant decrease in the institutional memory, valuable knowledge, and experience these retiring educators bring to OCES. These Educators will likely be replaced with

many employees who will bring new skills to the profession. Skills and knowledge in technology will likely be among those held by these new Educators.

The Division of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources should develop a training plan to prepare current educators to assume leadership roles and to recruit knowledgeable new educators. Such a plan for staff development must consider the skills needed by employees who represent various demographics and skill sets.

In terms of self-efficacy, DASNR should involve the educators in the planning process to make sure the educators training needs are met. The DASNR administration should use retiring educators to mentor new educators as they begin their careers.

All Oklahoma Extension educators should create programs for clientele based on the demographics and interests of the audience. In addition, the educators should recognize their target audiences' preferred method to receive information. Based on the conclusions of this study, educators may have to use methods with which they are less comfortable and experienced to appropriately reach their audiences.

This recommendation of professional development is supported by a call to action of the national Extension Committee on Organization and Policy (ECOP) in its report of the Extension's vision for the 21st century: "Develop hiring, compensation and professional development strategies that attract, retain and train qualified employees possessing concepts and skills necessary for engagement in a diverse and global society" (ECOP, 2002, p. 6). One of the reported "failures" of the 1990s from the DASNR 2003 Strategic plan was "inadequate support for professional development" (DASNR, 2003, p. 10 – S.W.O.T. Analysis).

A well-defined training system should be implemented for OCES educators. Training areas in marketing and communicating should be offered first in those areas most desired by educators. When a cycle of training has been conducted, assessment of the training is needed to evaluate its effectiveness. This recommendation complements DASNR's Strategic Plan, which includes to "identify critical staff development needs of Cooperative Extension County Extension Educators and Paraprofessionals, and design, deliver, and evaluate to meet identified needs" (DASNR, 2003, p. 17).

Part of the Strategic Plan for the Division of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources at OSU is to "develop and implement a mentoring program for new county educators" (DASNR, 2003, p. 5). A recruitment plan should be developed and implemented to recruit future Extension educators. The plan should include recruitment of high school students to pursue degrees appropriate to the needs of Extension as well as recruitment of college students who are earning related degrees. High school recruitment could be achieved through working with high school counselors, agricultural education teachers, and human environmental science teachers. The OCES system already began an internship process: "The Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service is making an investment in students who are potential employees" (Lehenbauer-Meier, 2008, p. 3). According to Lehenbauer-Meier (2008), the internship program began in the summer of 2007 with 12 college students.

The Department of Agricultural Education, Communications, and Leadership at Oklahoma State University should provide Extension courses for undergraduate and graduate students. These courses should include subjects such as teaching methods used

by educators and instructions from agricultural communications faculty about the various facets of communicating and marketing as an Extension educator.

OCES has no well-defined communications and marketing vision or plan available for its educators. Therefore, with this benchmark research, the OCES system must develop a plan to promote the OCES and all it offers to the citizens of Oklahoma. OCES administrators and educators developing and trying to improve their communications and marketing efforts need to compare this study to similar studies conducted in other states. They also need to review other states' evaluations and assessments to develop new assessments for Oklahoma. Research and professional guides developed in the Extension and/or communications and marketing industries need to be used as starting points to help them as they seek to improve their effectiveness.

Investigation should be conducted into the use of eXtension. OCES administrators should determine if this program provides resources for educators regarding marketing and communications for educators.

The significant demographic and relationship findings of this research should be considered when hiring OCES educators and when developing program planning and professional development for the state.

Recommendations for Future Research

The OCES system should assess the effectiveness of marketing and communications efforts by educators. Areas that should be studied include use of time, methods, and constituent groups targeted. This may be done via client/non-client

surveys, content analysis, and focus groups. This can be used to determine the actual versus perceived level of performance of OCES educators.

The OCES system should assess the effectiveness of educators' use of local newspaper publishers, radio stations, television stations, and multi–media agencies. This assessment could include the relationship educators have with these groups and the educators' perceived abilities to work effectively with them.

The finding implies that the younger the educator, the more he or she prefers to use the Web as a medium to reach clients and non-clients. This finding also presents the technology divide between the older and younger generations of educators. The working relationships that may occur between the new educators that will replace the current 49 educators over the age of 50, and ways to merge this gap should be conducted. Future research and hiring practices of OCES should consider this relationship.

Implications

Since communicating and marketing can mean something different to every OCES educator and administrator, meeting everyone's needs and developing the resources to promote programs most effectively may be a challenge.

One of the challenges facing DASNR is "Improving our ability to quickly respond to new opportunities. There are several dimensions to this challenge, including administration, budget, communication, effective use of technology, program integration, and establishing partnerships" (DASNR, 2003, p. 12 – S.W.O.T. Analysis). This study has provided information from OCES educators to help find a way to begin solving these problems.

OCES administrators must work with educators side-by-side during this process. Realizing and accepting OCES educators' needs and challenges should help this process. If OCES allows educators serve as an integral part of the process, the educators will know they are a valued part of a statewide system, a system with the goal of increasing awareness and use of the Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service.

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

APPROVAL LETTER

Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board

Date:	Friday, December 14, 2007
IRB Application No	AG0749
Proposal Title:	Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Educators Communications and Marketing Efforts: A Needs Assessment
Reviewed and Processed as:	Exempt

Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved Protocol Expires: 12/13/2008

Principal Investigator(s)

Amanda Erichsen
705 Highpoint Dr. Apt C
Stillwater, OK 74075

Shelly Sitton
435 Ag Hall
Stillwater, OK 74078

The IRB application referenced above has been approved. It is the judgment of the reviewers that the rights and welfare of individuals who may be asked to participate in this study will be respected, and that the research will be conducted in a manner consistent with the IRB requirements as outlined in section 45 CFR 46.

☒ The final versions of any printed recruitment, consent and assent documents bearing the IRB approval stamp are attached to this letter. These are the versions that must be used during the study.

As Principal Investigator, it is your responsibility to do the following:

1. Conduct this study exactly as it has been approved. Any modifications to the research protocol must be submitted with the appropriate signatures for IRB approval.
2. Submit a request for continuation if the study extends beyond the approval period of one calendar year. This continuation must receive IRB review and approval before the research can continue.
3. Report any adverse events to the IRB Chair promptly. Adverse events are those which are unanticipated and impact the subjects during the course of this research; and
4. Notify the IRB office in writing when your research project is complete.

Please note that approved protocols are subject to monitoring by the IRB and that the IRB office has the authority to inspect research records associated with this protocol at any time. If you have questions about the IRB procedures or need any assistance from the Board, please contact Beth McTernan in 219 Cordell North (phone: 405-744-5700, beth.mcternan@okstate.edu).

Sincerely,

Sue C Jacobs

Sue C. Jacobs, Chair
Institutional Review Board

APPENDIX B

SURVEY PRE E-MAIL

Dear Extension Educator:

My name is Amanda Erichsen, and I am a graduate student in the Department of Agricultural Education, Communications and Leadership. I am studying the Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service (OCES) educators' communications efforts, media sources, and resources. Additional investigators for this study include Dr. Shelly Sitton and Dr. Dwayne Cartmell, associate professors, and Dr. Charles Cox, interim department head.

We are conducting a research study to assess your personal and professional characteristics, communications efforts, media sources, and resources for development of effective training and resource materials. You have been selected to participate in the study because of your official position with OCES. The results of this study will be used to prepare a thesis to fulfill the requirements for a Master of Science degree in Agricultural Communications. The instrument will be administered during a statewide conference you have been asked to attend in Stillwater, Oklahoma, in late January 2008.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and truly appreciated. Door prizes will be given to five participants. Those who submit the survey will be put in a drawing to receive a door prize. Door prizes will be OSU gear, such as hats. If you choose to participate, your identity will not be disclosed and will be protected to the extent of the law and your answers will be confidential. For purposes of this study you will not be identified with your survey. No record of your name or identifiable information will be used as findings or results of the study.

Thank you. Your cooperation is appreciated.

Sincerely,

Amanda Erichsen
Graduate Student

Shelly Sitton, Ph.D.
Associate Professor and Chair

Okla. State Univ.
IRB
Approved 12\5\07
Expires 12\13\08
IRB # AG-07-49

APPENDIX C

SURVEY COVER LETTER

January 22, 2008

Dear Extension Educator:

My name is Amanda Erichsen, and I am a graduate student in the Department of Agricultural Education, Communications and Leadership. I am studying the Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service (OCES) educators' communications efforts, media sources, and resources. Additional investigators for this study include Dr. Shelly Sitton and Dr. Dwayne Cartmell, associate professors, and Dr. Charles Cox, interim department head.

We are conducting a research study to assess your personal and professional characteristics, communications efforts, media sources, and resources for development of effective training and resource materials. You have been selected to participate in the study because of your official position with OCES. The results of this study will be used to prepare a thesis to fulfill the requirements for a Master of Science degree in Agricultural Communications.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and truly appreciated. Door prizes will be given to five participants. The names of those who submit the survey will be put in a drawing to receive a door prize. Door prizes will be OSU gear, such as hats. If you choose to participate, your identity will not be disclosed and will be protected to the extent of the law; your answers will be confidential. For purposes of this study, you will not be identified with your survey. No record of your name or identifiable information will be used as findings or results of the study.

Please read the information sheet attached to the survey instrument and let me know if you have any questions before completing the instrument. You can complete the instrument now or at any time during the remainder of the meetings. When you are finished, please return the survey to the registration table. At that time, you can enter the door prize drawing.

Thank you. Your cooperation is appreciated.

Sincerely,

Amanda Erichsen
Graduate Student

Shelly Sitton, Ph.D.
Associate Professor and Chair

APPENDIX D

SURVEY INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT

INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT

Please read this consent document carefully before deciding to participate in this study.

My name is Amanda Erichsen, and I am a graduate student in the Department of Agricultural Education, Communications and Leadership. I am studying the Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service (OCES) educators' communications efforts, media sources, and resources. Additional investigators for this study include Dr. Shelly Sitton and Dr. Dwayne Cartmell, associate professors, and Dr. Charles Cox, interim department head, OSU Department of Agricultural Education, Communications and Leadership.

OCES educators need to have the proper resources and training to communicate and market OCES efficiently and effectively. Assessing your personal and professional characteristics, communications efforts, media sources, and resources allows development of effective training and resource materials for you. The purpose of this study is to determine your perceptions regarding your communications and marketing efforts, training needs, and resources.

In this study you will be asked to complete two sections on the questionnaire booklet. The first section includes your mass communication frequency of use, preference of delivery method, mass communication delivery skills rating, source of mass communication delivery skill training, and desire for additional mass communication delivery training. The second section includes your demographic information, perceptions of agricultural communications efforts, and training needs. The survey will take around 10-15 minutes to complete. You can stop at any time without penalty, and you do not have to answer any questions you do not want to answer. There are no known risks for participating in this study.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and truly appreciated. You can fill out the instrument now or at any time during the remainder of the meetings. When you are finished, please return the survey to the registration table. Door prizes will be given to five participants. Those who submit the survey will be put in a drawing to receive a door prize. If you wish to be considered for door prizes, you can write your name and contact information on piece of paper and put in the box at the registration table upon completion of the survey. Door prizes will be OSU gear, such as hats. If you choose to participate, your identity will not be disclosed and will be protected to the extent of the law and your answers will be confidential. For purposes of this study, you will not be identified with your survey. No record of your name or identifiable information will be used as findings or results of the study. The OSU IRB has the authority to inspect consent records and data files to assure compliance with approved procedures.

If you have any questions or concern, please call me or my research adviser, Dr. Shelly Sitton, at (405) 744-3690. Mailing address is 448 Agricultural Hall, Stillwater, OK 74078. For information on subjects' rights, contact Dr. Sue Jacobs, IRB Chair, 219 Cordell North, (405) 744-1676, or e-mail irb@okstate.edu.

APPENDIX E

SURVEY RECRUITMENT SCRIPT

Recruitment Script

Hi, my name is Amanda Erichsen. I'm a graduate student in the Department of Agricultural Education, Communications and Leadership at Oklahoma State University. We are conducting a survey to determine your perceptions regarding your communications and marketing efforts, training needs, and resources. This survey instrument is included in your registration packet. Please read the information sheet attached to the survey instrument and let me know if you have any questions before completing the instrument. You can fill out the instrument now or at any time during the remainder of the meetings. When you are finished, please return the survey to the registration table, and you will be entered into a drawing to receive one of five door prizes. Returned surveys will be kept in a locked briefcase until they can be secured in a locked office. The door prizes will be OSU gear, such as hats. Thank you.

Reminder Script

This is just a reminder that we are conducting a survey to determine your perceptions regarding your communications and marketing efforts, training needs, and resources. This survey is included in your registration packet. If you haven't already completed the instrument please do so at any time during the remainder of the meetings. When you are finished, please return the survey to me at the registration table. Returned surveys will be kept in a locked briefcase until they can be secured in a locked office. If you choose to participate, you will be entered into a drawing to receive one of five door prizes. The door prizes will be OSU gear, such as hats. Thank you.

APPENDIX F

SURVEY POST E-MAIL

Dear Extension Educator:

We recently gave you a questionnaire concerning a research study to assess your personal and professional characteristics, communications efforts, media sources, and resources for development of effective training and resource materials as an Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Services (OCES) educator. **We would like to thank you for taking the time to complete this survey instrument.** Your information is very valuable. **If you have not submitted your survey, we would like you to do so.**

Even though participation is voluntary, for the study to be a true representative study, we need your opinions. The results of this survey will give an opportunity for OCES administrators to provide effective training and resource materials for you. This study also will help fulfill requirements for a Master of Science degree in Agricultural Communication this semester.

If you have not already done so, please complete the questionnaire and return it to myself or Dr. Shelly Sitton at this address, 448 Agricultural Hall, Stillwater, OK 74078, **by February 5, 2008.**

Thank you. Your participation is appreciated.

Sincerely,

Amanda Erichsen
Graduate Student

Shelly Sitton, Ph.D.
Associate Professor and Chair

APPENDIX G

INSTRUMENT

Directions: Please evaluate each mass communication delivery method, from left to right, by entering your frequency of use for each method, preference of delivery method, mass communication delivery skills rating, source of mass communication skill training, desire for additional communication training, and ranking of choices for training.

	Enter Frequency of Use Per Year (Enter a number for each method)	Preference as a Delivery Method to Reach Your Audience(s)				Rate Your Personal Skill for Each Medium						Source of Mass Communication Skill Training (Check all that apply)							Desire Additional Training?		Select 5 Training Areas You Would Most Likely Attend (Check 5)
		High Preference	Medium Preference	Low Preference	Not a Preference	Excellent	More than Adequate	Adequate	Less than Adequate	Poor	No Experience	Prior Professional Employment	Graduate Studies	Undergraduate	In-service/Workshop	Experience (self-taught)	Other	None			
Newspaper – Write a story for publication		4	3	2	1	6	5	4	3	2	1								Yes	No	
Newspaper – Participated in an interview (face-to-face, telephone, e-mail)		4	3	2	1	6	5	4	3	2	1								Yes	No	
Radio – Create, produce (short feature or spot)		4	3	2	1	6	5	4	3	2	1								Yes	No	
Radio – Participated in an interview (face-to-face, telephone, e-mail)		4	3	2	1	6	5	4	3	2	1								Yes	No	
Television – Create, produce (short feature or spot)		4	3	2	1	6	5	4	3	2	1								Yes	No	
Television – Participated in an interview (face-to-face, telephone, e-mail)		4	3	2	1	6	5	4	3	2	1								Yes	No	
E-mail – Focused communications effort on a topic or program		4	3	2	1	6	5	4	3	2	1								Yes	No	
Web sites – Create, maintain, contribute information		4	3	2	1	6	5	4	3	2	1								Yes	No	
Exhibits – Use, create, produce (visual aids, window displays, booths, fair)		4	3	2	1	6	5	4	3	2	1								Yes	No	
Professional Publication – Write an article for publication (Extension journal, research journal)		4	3	2	1	6	5	4	3	2	1								Yes	No	
Magazine – Write a story for publication (specialized, general)		4	3	2	1	6	5	4	3	2	1								Yes	No	
Magazine – Participated in an interview (face-to-face, telephone, e-mail)		4	3	2	1	6	5	4	3	2	1								Yes	No	
Extension flier or newsletter – Write, edit		4	3	2	1	6	5	4	3	2	1								Yes	No	
Electronic media – Use (CDs, DVDs, audio tapes, video tapes, satellite conferences)		4	3	2	1	6	5	4	3	2	1								Yes	No	
Electronic media – Create, produce (CDs, DVDs, audio tapes, video tapes, satellite conferences)		4	3	2	1	6	5	4	3	2	1								Yes	No	

Instrument page 2

Directions: Please answer the following questions to provide the researchers with information about you.

1. What is your gender?
   1. Male
   2. Female

2. In what year were you born?_____

3. What is your highest degree?
   1. Bachelor's
   2. Master's
   3. Doctorate

4. In what academic area is your bachelor's degree?_____

5. Are you pursuing an advanced degree?
   1. Yes
   2. No

   If yes, what area?_____

6. Did you receive your undergraduate education from Oklahoma State University?
   1. Yes
   2. No

   If no, where did you receive your bachelor's degree(s)?_____

   _____

7. What Extension program area(s) do you serve? (Mark all that apply.)
   1. Agriculture
   2. 4-H
   3. Family and Consumer Sciences
   4. Horticulture
   5. Other, please specify _____

8. How many years have you been an OCES educator?_____

9. How many educators, program assistants, or administrators work in your county?

   _____

10. In what district is your county?
    1. Northeast
    2. Northwest
    3. Southeast
    4. Southwest

11. How satisfied are you with the amount of time you must devote to your job?
    1. Very dissatisfied
    2. Dissatisfied
    3. Neutral
    4. Satisfied
    5. Very Satisfied

12. How closely was your formal education related to your present job?
    1. Completely unrelated
    2. Only slightly related
    3. Moderately related
    4. Closely related
    5. Very closely related

13. For your county, where is the nearest newspaper published?
    1. In town
    2. In county
    3. Adjacent county
    4. Non-adjacent county
    5. Unknown

14. For your county, where is the nearest radio station?
    1. In town
    2. In county
    3. Adjacent county
    4. Non-adjacent county
    5. Unknown

15. For your county, where is the nearest television station?
    1. In town
    2. In county
    3. Adjacent county
    4. Non-adjacent county
    5. Unknown

16. For your county, where is the nearest multi-media agency (that would be able to produce public relations, advertising, electronic media, Web sites, etc.)?
    1. In town
    2. In county
    3. Adjacent county
    4. Non-adjacent county
    5. Unknown

17. Please select the **three (3) constituent groups** where you focus most of your **communications and marketing efforts**:
    1. County and state government elected/appointed officials
    2. Community leaders
    3. Businesses
    4. Adult residents
    5. Youth residents
    6. General public
    7. Clients and customers
    8. Media
    9. Individual decision makers varied according to program
    10. Agricultural groups and organizations
    11. Other, please specify_____

18. Please select the **three (3)** areas that best define your county's **most significant challenges**:
    1. Budget/funding
    2. Communications with government/state officials
    3. Communications with local officials
    4. Linking Extension programs to OSU
    5. Prioritizing programs
    6. Coordinating efforts and resources from various Extension programs
    7. Communicating a consistent brand or message for Extension
    8. Generating positive visibility for Extension
    9. Increasing capacity to reach new and diverse audiences
    10. Attracting more minorities to agriculture
    11. Staffing/personnel issues

19. How many hours per month do you spend on marketing and communications activities or efforts?_____

20. Please rate the following items as perceived effectiveness of your county programming efforts, using the following scale:

	Effective	Somewhat Effective	Somewhat Ineffective	Ineffective	Do Not Do
Media relations and news releases	5	4	3	2	1
Article placement, such as columns in newspapers and magazines	5	4	3	2	1
Radio – broadcast news	5	4	3	2	1
Radio – public service announcements	5	4	3	2	1
TV – broadcast news	5	4	3	2	1
TV – public service announcements	5	4	3	2	1
Online promotion	5	4	3	2	1
Web site development or maintenance	5	4	3	2	1
Direct mail – public relations and/or public service announcements	5	4	3	2	1
Exhibits	5	4	3	2	1

21. What references do you use regarding writing, communicating, and the media?

    _____

    _____

22. Please give any other suggestions or comments to the researcher concerning Extension's media efforts:

    _____

    _____

    _____

    _____

    _____

APPENDIX H

PANEL OF EXPERTS

Dr. Shelly Sitton, Associate Professor, Department of Agricultural Education, Communications & Leadership, OSU College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources

Dr. Dwayne Cartmell, Associate Professor, Department of Agricultural Education, Communications & Leadership, OSU College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources

Dr. Charles Cox, Interim Assistant Director and Program Leader, 4-H Youth Development, and Interim Department Head, Department of Agricultural Education Communications and Leadership, OSU College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources

Dr. Jim Rutledge, Executive Director, Oklahoma 4-H Foundation

Dr. Garvin Quinn, Director, Agricultural Communication Services, OSU College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources

Dr. Jeff Sallee, Assistant Professor, and Extension Program Specialist, 4-H Youth and Development, Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service

Dr. Cara Ferrell, Assistant Director, OSU Career Services, and former OCES educator, OSU College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources

APPENDIX I

RESPONSES TO QUESTION 4 OF INSTRUMENT

Participants' Bachelor's Degree Academic Area

Animal Science = 21
Agriculture Education = 14
Family and Consumer Science = 11
Home Economics = 7
Horticulture = 5
Agricultural Economics = 3
Agriculture = 3
Home Economics = 3
Human and Environmental Sciences = 3
Vocational Home Economic Education = 3
Agricultural Communications = 2
Animal Science - Nutrition = 2
Education = 2
Elementary Education = 2
FCS Education = 2
Agricultural Leadership
Agronomy
Animal Science and Agricultural Economics
Animal Science and Agricultural Education
Child Development
Child Development - Mental Health
Consumer Studies and Family and Consumer Sciences
Early Childhood
Food Management, D & N
FRCD
Home Economic Communication
Home Economic Education
Home Economic Education
Home Economic Vocational Education
Home Economic and Early Childhood
Home Economics, Animal Sciences, Agricultural Business
Home Economics, Housing Design and Cons Resources
Hotel and Restaurant Administration
Leisure service management
Marketing
Nutrition
Soil Science
Vocational Home Economics

APPENDIX J

RESPONSES TO QUESTION 6 OF INSTRUMENT

Universities Attended by Educators for Bachelor's Degree (Other Than OSU)

Cameron University = 4
Northeastern State U = 3
Kansas State University = 2
Colorado State University
East Central University
Harding University
Langston University
MTSU
NTSU
OSU = Ohio State University
South Dakota State University
Southeastern Oklahoma State University
Southwestern Oklahoma State University = 2
Texas Tech University = 2
University of Central Oklahoma
University of Tulsa
University of Oklahoma

APPENDIX K

RESPONSES TO QUESTION 21 OF INSTRUMENT

Resources Listed by OCES Educators Regarding

Writing, Communicating, and the Media

Note: This list is left as written by participants. The entries were grouped by category according to researcher.

4-H

- 4-H Literature and Extension Publications

OSU Agricultural Communication Services

- Ag Communication releases, e answers, other Extension Web sites
- Ag Communication, Industry Newsletters, Email, Web, State Specialist
- Ag Communications Materials, OSU Fact Sheets, Area and State Specialist Articles
- Ag Communications Web site and news releases
- Ag Communications, state specialists, District specialists
- Contact media through county or communications specialist
- Division news from OSU Web; FCS Newsletters and news articles from OSU Extension news staff - Katie
- Gale Goodner
- Information from Ag Communications, use the Web for info from other cooperative extension
- OSU Ag Communication
- Use Ag. Communication's news articles and often expand to use

Style Guides and Dictionaries

- AP style book
- AP Style Manual and Dictionary
- APA
- APA style guide
- Chicago Manual of Style, Dictionary, Technical Writing (book), thesaurus
- Dictionary (3 separate entries)
- Style books, dictionary, grammar books, internet
- Thesaurus

Area, Departmental, and State Specialist

- Area & State Specialist
- Area and state staff
- Department resources, online
- District, State, and Professional News

Centra Training, In-Service Training, and VoTech Training

- Centra Training & In-Service Training

- In-service & Experience

OSU Extension and OSU

- Extension fact sheets/journals
- Extension
- Extension and research publications, Extension newsletters, journalism textbook, Extension Web sites
- Extension fact sheets, research. Impact team support materials
- Extension information
- Extension publications
- Extension publications, all states
- Extension service information - .edu sites
- Extension specialists at OSU & KSU and research based reliable industry experts
- Extension, research based
- Extension, USDA and 4-H
- Extension-Ok & other states
- OCES materials, mayo clinic, CDC
- OSU and other state Extension
- OSU Extension stuff
- OSU materials
- OSU publications, national 4-H publications
- OSU State specialist; Extension Web sites
- OSU, Noble, Kerr
- OSU's information and information from USDA and other state Extensions
- Subject matter specialist, OSU fact sheets other land grant universities
- USDA, Extension news, 4-H core competencies

Fact Sheets

- Fact sheets
- Fact sheets and department Web sites
- Fact sheets form all states
- Fact sheets, books, specialist information
- Fact sheets, research articles, calls to specialists, district newsletters.
- Facts sheets and research reports
- Facts sheets, other state extension sites, textbooks, ext. specialists
- OSU fact sheets plus additional info from other states cooperative Extension services
- OSU Facts sheets
- OSU facts sheets and area and state specialists
- OSU facts sheets, other university facts sheets, Web sites, book references, Extension agents handbook

Internet

- Internet and OSU publications

- Internet sites
- Internet, examples, peers
- Online publications
- OSU Web site, emailed news releases, specialists
- OSU, Eanswers, ADA, etc.
- Samples online
- Visit other state and county Web sites
- Web, Books and magazines
- Web, dictionary, and other articles

None

- NA
- None (4 entries)

News Releases

- How to write professional article books. Horticulture references form OSU department
- I mostly use OSU news releases I get e-mailed to me.
- Other news releases
- Press releases from OSU

Other

- Personal contact, e-mail, OSU, other Web sites
- Direct mail and newsletters
- Resources, reports, and news releases from OSU FCS personnel
- Self taught
- Undergrad education, prior experience
- Various
- What I learned at OSU
- What references?

Spell Check

- Spell Check
- Spell check; occasionally look at OSU communications as an example
- Spell check, word count, work experience, knowledge of local interests

APPENDIX L

RESPONSES TO QUESTION 22 OF INSTRUMENT

Suggestions and Comments Given by OCES Educators

Regarding Oklahoma Cooperative Extension's Media Efforts

Note: This list is left as written by participants.

1. 4-H is perceived as Ag only, needs changed. Extension does a poor job of marketing across state.
2. Appreciate receiving news articles for release
3. BORING, need exciting stuff
4. Centra has been great. Video Conferencing has been used by Votech for several years; OSU needs to work with Votech. Need training in this area.
5. Centra is a great resource, video conferencing would help, more money needed
6. Extension has a very poor media program. We are reactive in our efforts and the only time it is a priority is if we want money.
7. Extension is more than agriculture. The consistency message needs to be consistent in all program areas.
8. Good questions & important study
9. Help us tap into the Ad budget that OSU Tulsa seems to have. They and the med school have billboards and ads in the Tulsa World. We rely on PSA's, etc., and we have $0 for advertising. We do a lot with nothing, but still this is a gross inequity within the OSU system.
10. I try to foresee upcoming issues to prepare news letters, articles, & etc. Be proactive, not reactive.
11. I'm not sure after 100 years the public is still not sure what we do
12. In-service training would be helpful
13. Keep providing more news releases and more media efforts to promote what Extension does.
14. Locally, general FCS info space has been reduced, as it is really hard to get anything in. Prioritizing by newspaper heads
15. Make county Web site easier to access (URL should be easy) use more web related training

16. Mass media efforts to tell people what Extension is and what we can do for them. Countless times that I have to explain Extension for the first time to people. Would like to be able to tell people I work for Extension, and they say, "Oh, I know what that is."

17. More training is needed!

18. My background in mass comm. prepared me better than any other possible minor or previous experience. Students considering a career in Extension should be required to take mass communication classes!

19. Need Extension training in all areas of media for Extension employees - particularly those in the co

20. Need help with Web page design and ways to keep from loosing Web pages when computers go down or change. Lost others and it takes more time than we can allow to get back need one bad. Just too slow because of skills to get one back.

21. Need more help from OCES in marketing set programs, especially in FCS.

22. Need more online resources & more user-friendly sites. Need more use of technology in communications

23. Need more training, in-service

24. Need to advance technological abilities of employees

25. Need to focus on a more unified marketing scheme

26. needs improvement

27. Not many professions ask employees to develop a product, research, promote and evaluate a program by themselves. Because of this, media efforts sometimes do not receive proper considerations.

28. not a lot of money spent to promote extension and no use of billboards and not much TV promotion or appearances

29. OCES needs marketing programs to reach mass media across Oklahoma - TV, billboards, and supplements in major newspapers

30. Selling Extension to Oklahoma is not a problem. The producer programs are outdated and only serve to provide a free meal to any person that will sit in the chair while we talk.

31. Teleconferencing & media relations

32. They are very helpful. I have been asked to be on radio and TV but have not been trained in that area and very nervous about it.

33. This is an area that is too often neglected.

34. TV and radio are hard to do in many places in the state

35. We have always seemed like a stepchild to the University and FCS is like that to the university and to the college of Ag. I do think with the current administration it is getting better. Our new OSU pins Agriculture at the bottom instead of Extension

36. We NEED a statewide media blitz to reach generation x and general public to let them know about OCES and its services and programs. Practical use of blogs, pod casts, and Web sites

37. We need more visibility to the general (urban) public. Many people still don't know what Extension is, that it is connected to OSU, or even what the land grant mission is.

38. We need nice OSU Graphic pieces that can be used interchangeable on Velcro board for making custom exhibits

39. We need statewide TV/Billboards, etc.

40. Working on a Web site with CED (slow process). Beginning stages of possible gardening TV program on local college TV. Very difficult to get consistent articles published in other city/community papers. County 80,000 population. Residents, only around 6,000 subscribers to local paper. More take Tulsa World, however Tulsa Co. Extension already publish with them. People (homeowners) constantly "hunger" for horticulture/gardening news, but extremely hard to reach target market. Newsletter postage too expensive.

VITA

Amanda R. Erichsen

Candidate for the Degree of

Master of Science

Thesis: OKLAHOMA COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE EDUCATORS' ACCESSIBILITY TO RESOURCES AND TRAINING REGARDING COMMUNICATIONS AND MARKETING: A NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Major Field: Agricultural Communications

Biographical:

Personal Data: Born in Manhattan, Kansas, May 5, 1981, the daughter of Harold and Susan Erichsen.

Education: Graduated from Chapman High School, Chapman, Kansas, in May, 1999; received Bachelor of Science degree in Agricultural Communications and Journalism with minors in Agronomy and Animal Science from Kansas State University, Manhattan, Kansas, in August 2004. Completed the requirements for the Master of Science in Agricultural Communications at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma, in May 2008.

Experience: Raised on a farm near Junction City, Kansas; Graduate Assistant from August 2006 to May 2008 for the Center for Executive and Professional Development, William S. Spears School of Business, Oklahoma State University; Communications Coordinator from June 2004 to August 2006 for Alpha Gamma Rho Fraternity, Kansas City, Missouri; Student Assistant from September 2002 to May 2003 for Kansas State University Department of Biological and Agricultural Engineering.

Professional Memberships: Gamma Sigma Delta; Association for Communication Excellence In Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Life and Human Sciences; Oklahoma State University Agricultural Education Graduate Student Association; National Agri-Marketing Association; and the North American Colleges and Teachers of Agriculture.

Name: Amanda R. Erichsen Date of Degree: May, 2008

Institution: Oklahoma State University Location: Stillwater, Oklahoma

Title of Study: OKLAHOMA COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE EDUCATORS' ACCESSIBILITY TO RESOURCES AND TRAINING REGARDING COMMUNICATIONS AND MARKETING: A NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Pages in Study: 128 Candidate for the Degree of Master of Science

Major Field: Agricultural Communications

Scope and Method of Study: The purpose of this study is to determine the perceptions of Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service (OCES) educators regarding their communications and marketing efforts, training needs, and resources. Through a quantitative survey administered at a statewide conference in January 2008, OCES educators shared how often and how well they use specific media, how they prefer to deliver information to clientele, where they learned mass communication skills, and what communications training they desired. According to andragogy theory, adults will accept and implement a new marketing/communications plan better if they are part of the planning process. Data were gathered and analyzed using descriptive statistics. The survey response rate was 60.78%.

Findings and Conclusions: Educators are "satisfied" with the time they devote to their job. "Increasing capacity to reach new and diverse audiences" is the greatest challenge as an OCES educator. OCES educators spend 15.13 hours per month marketing and communicating. They focus a majority of that time on youth and adult residents. OCES educators perceive media relations, article placement, and direct mail as effective county programming efforts. OCES educators have access to a newspaper publisher in town, a radio station in town, a television station in a non-adjacent county, and a multi-media agency in town. Educators perceive their highest skills in communications and marketing are writing a story for a newspaper, developing an Extension flier or newsletter, or communicating via e-mail. Educators indicated they have most of their training through on-the-job experience. The five areas selected by educators for more training were Web site maintenance, creating electronic media, writing for a newspaper story, writing or editing an Extension flier or newsletter, and using electronic media. A moderate positive relationship exists between educators' skill rating of using and maintaining Web sites and their year of birth.

Adviser's Approval: Shelly Sitton